Indicative and imperative: an examination op the logic of decision in Christian ethics

Pomerantz, Susan F.

INDICATIVE AND IMPERATIVE:

AN EXAMINATION OF THE LOGIC OF DECISION

IN

CHRISTIAN ETHICS

by

Susan F. Pomerantz

Ph. D. Thesis

Submitted to the University of Durham

June, 1973

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRECIS

It is the purpose of this dissertation to analyse the logic of ethical decision-making, particularly that of Christian ethics. One of the central problems which has confronted ethical analyses for the last century has been a concern to avoid the two forms of "naturalistic fallacy," set forth by David Hume and G. E. Moore, and this has caused special problems for religious ethics in which ethical imperatives are related specifically to statements of fact. The setting for this study of the relation of indicative and imperative in Christian ethics is a philosophical discussion of the ways in which moral philosophers have accounted for the logic of decision. After explaining the two versions of the naturalistic fallacy, the prescriptivist account of ethical decision is examined, since its primary proponent, R. M. Hare, has developed, by means of the practical syllogism, an understanding of the relation of fact to value and imperatives which avoids these fallacies. Two challenges to prescriptivism and to the validity of both versions of naturalism are then analysed: one of which relies upon the dual logical force of ethical language and the other of which examines the logic of self-involvement and the role of attitudes in decision-making. From this analysis we will conclude that a

relationship between indicative and imperative is possible and indeed essential in religious moral decision and it is a relationship which the naturalistic fallacies do not destroy. The writings of four contemporary Christian ethicists will then be examined to show the logic of decision which is implicit in each account. Four distinct styles of moral decision will emerge from this analysis which we have called ontological ethics, imperative ethics, dialectical ethics, and existential ethics, corresponding respectively to the work of Paul Tillich, Emil Brunner, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Rudolf Bultmann. Some conclusions will then be drawn regarding the relationship of religious truth-claims to moral imperatives and the final challenge of naturalism will be assessed.

INTRODUCTION

In his analysis of the nature of religious belief, R. B. Braithwaite offered an interesting suggestion regarding the nature of the relationship between religious statements and moral imperatives which has been the source of a good deal of discussion and reflection.[1] Having accepted the verificational principle of meaning as appropriate to the understanding of ordinary language, Braithwaite claimed that it was consistent with his empiricism to accept as well the supposition that meaning could be determined by the use to which language was put. Religious statements, he said, are unverifiable by the standard methods and in this sense they are similar to moral principles, for these likewise are neither "statements about particular matters of empirical fact, scientific hypotheses . . . [nor] the logically necessary statements of logic and mathematics . . . "[2] We need to ask therefore what function religious and moral statements serve and this is a function which can be observed and verified in a straightforward empirical way.

---

[1] R. B. Braithwaite, "An Empiricist's View of Religious Belief" (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1955), reprinted in Ian T. Ramsey, ed., Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy (SCM Press, London, 1966), p. 53-73. See also the discussion which follows by J. N. Schofield, D. M. Mackinnon, and Ian T. Ramsey, with a response by Braithwaite, p. 74-94.

[2] Braithwaite, op. cit., p. 55.

Braithwaite insisted that previous understandings of this use were inadequate because they had centred on the emotive use of language. It had been assumed that moral language was used to express one's feelings about an object or action, while religious language, as for example the assertion "God is our Heavenly Father," was used to express and evince the feelings of the believer toward the object of his belief. This analysis, Braithwaite argued, does not do justice to the nature of the assertions themselves nor does it stand up to a careful examination of the actions of the believer or the moral agent. What such an examination shows is that moral and religious assertions are used to express an intention to act a certain way, or to follow a particular way of life, and thus they have conative rather than emotive meaning.[1] Thus "the meaning of a religious assertion is given by its use in expressing the asserter's intention to follow a specified policy of behaviour."[2] Furthermore, this intention to adopt the appropriate behaviour is not evoked or caused by one's belief in moral and religious assertions, but rather is what gives rise to the assertions in the first place. Braithwaite argued that "it is the intention to behave which constitutes what is known as religious conviction."[3]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 60-61.

[2] Ibid., p. 61-2.

[3] Ibid., p. 62.

It is the uniqueness of a religious morality, Braithwaite claimed, that it consists of both propositions and intentions. Whereas morality is a matter of expressing one's intentions to act in certain ways through the use of value-judgements, moral principles, and imperatives, a religious way of life involves the telling of stories which serve as the background for decisions. Thus, for example, the Christian ethic involves not only a certain set of intentions to act agapeistically, but also a collection of stories in which that loving way of life is illustrated and reiterated. "To assert the whole set of assertions of the Christian religion is both to tell the Christian doctrinal story and to confess allegiance to the Christian way of life."[1] The important feature of these stories, by which Braithwaite makes his major point regarding the nature of religious belief, is that, though they are in the form of straightforwardly empirical propositions, they need not and cannot be proven true since they are not subject to empirical verification. Indeed, there is no need for the propositions within the Christian set of stories, for example, to be consistent with one another, for the sole criterion of their meaningfulness is not their truth but their ability to express the commitment of believers. What is important for the Christian is to entertain the stories, to think about them, and thereby to allow them to motivate and inspire moral action.

[1] Ibid., p. 66.

Indeed, the relationship between indicatives and imperatives within the Christian way of life is held by Braithwaite to be a purely causal or psychological one. Thus,

> . . . if the religious stories need not be believed, what function do they fulfill in the complex state of mind and behaviour known as having a religious belief? How is entertaining the story related to resolving to pursue a certain way of life? My answer is that the relation is a psychological and causal one. It is an empirical psychological fact that many people find it easier to resolve upon and to carry through a course of action which is contrary to their natural inclinations if this policy is associated in their minds with certain stories.[1]

What is primary in the Christian ethic, and what is indeed common to theistic religious moralities, is the entertainment of the proposition that when one fulfills a certain course of behaviour one is doing the will of God. Thinking of this proposition can motivate the believer to act in the appropriate ways; the proposition thus produces "a state of mind in which it is easier to carry out a particular course of action . . . ."[2] The causal connection also operates in the other direction, however: that is, from the intention to the holding of religious propositions. "In religious conviction the resolution to follow a way of life is primary; it is not derived from believing, still less from thinking of, any empirical story."[3] Religious beliefs are thus formed by the deepest intentions of the

---

[1] Ibid., p. 68.

[2] Ibid., p. 70.

[3] Ibid., p. 71.

believer to fulfill certain patterns of human behaviour and interaction and it is the value of religious assertions that they express this commitment.

In the background of Braithwaite's analysis is an assumption regarding the relationship of fact and value, indicatives and imperatives, descriptive and evaluative meaning, which it is the intention of this thesis to examine and criticise. This assumption has two important characteristics. On the one hand, it is argued that statements of fact, and indicative religious propositions regarding historical events or metaphysical realities, in and of themselves cannot yield moral imperatives for action, for these latter depend upon an extra element described by Braithwaite as "intention." Thus, in discussing Matthew Arnold's parable of the three Lord Shaftesburies, he argues that

> . . . even when the story is literally believed, when it is believed that there is a magnified Lord Shaftesbury who commands or desires the carrying out of the behaviour policy, that <u>in itself</u> is no reason for carrying out the policy: it is necessary <u>also</u> to have the <u>intention of doing</u> what the magnified Lord Shaftesbury commands or desires.[1]

We need therefore to examine the character of these religious indicatives and in so doing to determine in what sense it is true to say that moral imperatives cannot be derived from statements of fact. This will require not only an analysis of the nature of decision-making in general in which imperatives are often quite explicitly

---

[1] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 70; underlines mine.

related in various ways to indicative statements, but also an investigation of the derivation of imperatives within the Christian ethic specifically. In so doing we will be seeking some insight into the relationship of faith and action and into the role which beliefs about matters of fact can and do play in moral decision-making.

On the other hand, an analysis like Braithwaite's is characterised by the lack of a sufficient explanation of the formation of moral intentions. As far as one can gather from this particular essay, intentions are just something which we choose and which are articulated in the expression of moral beliefs and policies of action. Since " . . . the adoption of a set of moral principles is a matter of the personal decision to live according to these principles . . . " and since morality is fundamentally "non-propositional," then it is assumed that deciding is somehow its own justification.[1] Thus Braithwaite claims that "An intention . . . cannot be logically based upon anything except another intention."[2] Such an assumption regarding the nature of decision-making we will try to show is unnecessarily limited and finally inadequate. For what can be seen by examining the logic of decision is that matters of fact do bear a significant relation to intentions, a relation which is implicit within characteristic moral attitudes. We will examine therefore the

---

[1] Ibid., p. 72. [2] Ibid.

logic of attitudes and their expression in onlooks and will attempt a characterisation of the root attitude which informs the Christian ethic. In this way the limits, source and foundation of a way of life may perhaps be better understood and its character more fully appreciated.

To proceed in this analysis, we will begin by examining the two versions of the naturalistic fallacy which have been suggested in the writings of G. E. Moore and David Hume. This will furnish the contemporary background for some of the prevalent assumptions regarding the relationship of "is" and "ought." Following this exposition, we will examine three different analyses of the logic of ethical decision centring specifically on this problem of the relation between indicatives and imperatives. We will analyse first the prescriptivist account of R. M. Hare from which moral decision emerges as a matter of inference from general moral principles to specific imperatives of action. The difficulties involved in his position, particularly with regard to the formation of moral principles and with regard to his restatement of the naturalistic fallacy, will then be examined by studying an alternative account. The descriptivists claim that some statements of fact, particularly those regarding social institutions or roles, can entail or at least strongly imply imperatives, thus arguing that moral decision can be a non-inferential matter. It will then be important to examine another element in moral

decision which is not made explicit in the prescriptivist or descriptivist accounts, namely the centrality of attitudes. We will attempt, by using the work of J. L. Austin and Donald Evans, to suggest a way in which indicatives and imperatives are related in decision due to the performative force of language, and it is particularly the self-involving character of this language which illuminates some of the most important features of religious morality.

In the second half of the work, we will examine this relation of indicative and imperative in four contemporary theologians who have described the nature and content of specifically Christian notions of God, the world, and human existence and who have drawn out the implications of these beliefs for the moral behaviour of those who adhere to them. In conclusion, we will summarise the relations of indicative and imperative within Christian ethics and assess the final challenge of the naturalistic fallacy to an understanding of the logic of ethical decision.

CHAPTER I

THE NATURALISTIC FALLACIES

A great deal of the debate in moral philosophy in this century has centered on the naturalistic fallacy and its implications for moral reasoning. Some philosophers have attempted to develop understandings of ethics which avoid this fallacy and in so doing have served to sharpen the debate now ensuing regarding the character of "naturalism." It is into the midst of this debate that we now step in order to arrive at a clear comprehension of the naturalistic fallacy and, once this understanding is reached, to look carefully at the consequences of its acceptance for an analysis of the logic of decision.

Upon close examination of the fallacy of naturalism, it becomes obvious that one must speak of two versions of the fallacy and that one must pick a way carefully through the confusion of terms and phrases which results. Indeed our study of the relation of indicative and imperative will be dependent to a great extent upon a clarification of two other phrases with which indicative and imperative are easily conflated, namely fact and value and is and ought. It may be with regard to explicating the logic of ethical decision-making the terms indicative and imperative can provide the clearest insight into the validity and appropriateness of the naturalistic fallacy

in either of its versions. The use of the other two sets of terms in the definition of this fallacy therefore needs to be explained and evaluated.

It was to distinguish the relationship of fact and value that G. E. Moore wrote his Principia Ethica in 1903;[1] so it is not surprising that in attempting to arrive at a concise definition of the nature of value, specifically "good," he should come to the realisation that it was logically and ethically mistaken to confuse fact and value with each other. Therefore, we find here one version of the naturalistic fallacy which demands closer examination. Moore's method of inquiry concerning the relationship of fact and value is to seek first for the unique subject matter of ethics and then to establish both the character of this subject matter and the means by which it is known or perceived by us. He takes as the primary concern of ethics the notion of "good conduct."[2] Since Moore takes the adjective "good" to be applicable to things other than conduct, he proposes to devote the greater portion of his effort to understanding "good" itself; only then will he explore the specific application of this adjective to conduct.[3]

---

[1]G. E. Moore, Principia Ethica (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1903).

[2]Ibid., p. 2.

[3]Ibid., p. 2-3. It is in chapter 5 that Moore devotes himself to the concerns of practical ethics, a consideration which he takes to be appropriate only after the character of good itself and the nature of propositions regarding good have been thoroughly examined.

It is therefore to his search for the nature of value that we now turn. Moore divides his consideration of good into two questions: "What is the nature of the proposition: 'This is good in itself'?" and "What things are good in themselves?"[1] In considering the nature of the good, Moore is seeking for a way of understanding the meaning of this word. Ordinarily, that is with most words, meaning is explained by means of definitions and particularly those which "describe the real nature of the object or notion denoted by a word."[2] Yet, Moore claimed, this kind of definition will only suit those objects or notions which are complex and which therefore can be analysed into the simplest qualities or parts of which they are composed.[3] To define therefore is to analyse or break down and it is precisely this which cannot be done with good. Good is "a simple and indefinable quality";[4] it is one of the simple qualities out of which more complex objects or notions are composed and may therefore be part of the analysis or definition of such objects. The reverse however is not true; the meaning of good cannot be given in terms of other objects or notions to which it is applied. It is one of the "ultimate terms by reference to which whatever is

---

[1] Ibid., p. 142-6.

[2] Ibid., p. 7.

[3] Ibid., p. 7, 9-10.

[4] Ibid., p. 10.

capable of definition must be defined."[1] Propositions about good are therefore synthetic, never analytic, and to find any meaning in this word at all one must recognise that good is different from those things to which it is applied as a predicate.[2]

In giving reasons for his claim regarding the meaning of good, Moore states his version of the naturalistic fallacy. Naturalism is the attempt of moral philosophers to establish the validity of some quality or value which is considered to be good by claiming that goodness is equivalent to or that its meaning is totally defined by that quality. To make this claim is to render all propositions about good tautologous and to make the task of moral philosophy self-defeating. For, on the one hand, it must surely be possible to disagree about the applicability of the predicate "good" to any subject; it must be a matter of some reflection, rather than a simple explication of self-evident truths, whether this predicate is appropriate to the matter in question. If good is defined as the object in question, then no standard of judgement is available to provide the basis of significant disagreement. Thus, "if good is defined as something else, it is then impossible either to prove that any other definition is wrong or even to deny such a definition."[3]

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 7, 14.

[3] Ibid., p. 10-11.

One aspect of Moore's version of the naturalistic fallacy is therefore a criticism of those moral philosophers who would make propositions regarding good mere tautologies and it was the result of his analysis that he considered theological ethics as invalidated as well.

On the other hand, Moore argues, ethical issues must be matters of some significance and moral philosophy as a discipline must surely be defeating itself by reductionism in so far as the naturalistic fallacy is committed. If it is assumed that the task of a moral philosopher is not only to provide some insight into what is good but also to be convincing or persuasive, then such persuasion cannot be done effectively when good is reduced to some other object or quality. The reduction can only lead to the conclusion that to be moral is to know the definitions of things or at least to know the way people use words and specifically the way they use the word good. To help us in this understanding, we need the sciences, or those disciplines whose purpose is descriptive, rather than moral philosophy. Moore appeals to our experience as ones who reflect on matters of decision to argue that when we inquire after what is good we are asking for something other than a definition of the matter under consideration. "Everyone does in fact understand the question 'Is this good?' When he thinks of it, his state of mind is different from what it would be, were he asked 'Is this pleasant, or desired, or approved?' It has a distinct meaning for him, even though he may not recognise

it is distinct."[1] The other aspect of Moore's version of the naturalistic fallacy is thus the claim that good is unique or autonomous and every attempt to reduce it to something else not only destroys this uniqueness but defeats the task of moral philosophy, the need for which is established on the basis of our experience of dilemma and decision. Moore's version of this fallacy is therefore appropriately labelled "the non-reducibility of good" and we will see the ways in which this version differs from another proposed by Hume later on in this chapter.

Before proceeding, however, we should also examine the way in which Moore applied the understanding of this fallacy to the second major concern of ethics, namely to provide some insight into what things are good in themselves. It was Moore's first concern in this application to show that the moral philosophy of some of his predecessors, particularly Spencer, Mill, and Sidgwick, is guilty of committing this fallacy in identifying good with some natural object. In this identification, the natural object or quality is considered to be the <u>one</u> thing which is good in itself and, it is assumed, that in knowing this one thing one knows the <u>meaning</u> of good. Now it was certainly not Moore's intention to maintain that we cannot say at all what is good in itself simply because good is indefinable; rather he is attempting to separate out the two questions

---

[1] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 16-17.

which are confused in the identification of good with some natural object. The one question is to ask about the meaning of good; the second is to ask what things are good.

> That a thing should be good, it has been thought, means that it possesses this single property; and hence (it is thought) only what possesses this property is good. The inference seems very natural; and yet what is meant by it is self-contradictory. For those who make it fail to perceive that their conclusion "what possesses this property is good" is a significant proposition: that it does not mean either "what possesses this property, possesses this property" or "the word 'good' denotes that a thing possesses this property." And yet, if it does not mean one or other of these two things, the inference contradicts its own premise.[1]

In those systems of ethics which Moore calls "naturalistic ethics" goodness is seen "to consist in a relation to something which exists here and now . . ."; however, his criticism is equally forceful against metaphysical systems of ethics in which goodness is defined in relation to a transcendent or non-natural object or quality. It is here that his criticism is directed against the Stoics, Spinoza, Hegel and Kant and several important points are further made regarding the implications of the discovery of this fallacy for the task of ethics.

Metaphysical ethics are those systems which "use some metaphysical proposition as a ground for inferring some fundamental proposition of Ethics."[2] The task of the metaphysician, as Moore interprets it, is thus not

---

[1] Ibid., p. 38.

[2] Ibid., p. 110.

only to describe or define the nature of a supersensible reality which is not a part of the natural world but to maintain as well that practical ethical truths can be logically derived from such descriptions. Such a derivation is made on the grounds that the "Supreme Good" can be defined in metaphysical terms and the insistence is that "Ethics should be 'based' on Metaphysics,"[1] or "that the question 'What is real?' has some logical bearing upon the question 'What is good?'"[2] Moore's criticism of metaphysical ethics is thus that:

> To hold that from any proposition asserting "Reality is of this nature" we can infer, or obtain confirmation for, any proposition asserting "This is good in itself" is to commit the naturalistic fallacy. And that a knowledge of what is real supplies reasons for holding certain things to be good in themselves is either implied or expressly asserted by all those who define the Supreme Good in metaphysical terms.[3]

Now Moore is here faced with the difficulty of explaining precisely why metaphysics cannot be relevant to ethical concerns and two of his reasons are of special importance to religious ethics. His first argument involves the assertion that metaphysics could be relevant to practical ethics if it could tell us about the possible existence in the future of some reality which our actions now could effect. Since practical ethics is concerned with <u>means</u>, then the description of some future end to which our

---

[1] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 114.

[2] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 113.

[3] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 114.

actions may be directed will be highly relevant to answering the practical question, "What ought we to do?"[1] Moore seems in this part of his argument to be assuming that the goodness of this future goal will be established independently of the description and therefore will not be the role of metaphysics to justify. Unfortunately, as Moore points out, metaphysics is not satisfied with this role of describing the future, but is rather interested in describing the nature of eternal reality. Therefore it cannot be relevant to ethics; "For it is plain that what exists eternally cannot be affected by our actions; and only what is affected by our actions can have a bearing on their value as means."[2]

It is here that Moore has again separated two questions which are considered in metaphysical ethical systems to have some bearing upon one another: the question "What is real?" and the question "What is good?" Indeed the consequence of this separation is that a logical gap is seen to exist between the two such that answers to one cannot be also answers to the other. Moore was prepared to go so far as to say that imagination or fiction has more relevance to ethics than metaphysics.

> The metaphysical construction of Reality would therefore be quite as useful, for the purposes of Ethics, if it were a mere construction of an

---

[1] Ibid., p. 115. Moore claims here that "The Christian doctrines of heaven and hell are in this way highly relevant to practical ethics."

[2] Ibid., p. 117.

> imaginary Utopia: provided the kind of thing suggested is the same, fiction is as useful as truth, for giving us matter, upon which to exercise the judgment of value.[1]

And later in the same section he claims that the "wilder" the speculations and descriptions of metaphysics are, the more useful they are for ethics, but the less useful for metaphysics.[2] Now it is precisely the reason for this assertion regarding the role of imagination in ethical decision that we need to discover and in so doing to understand the nature of this gap which Moore believed to exist between goodness and reality. This reason for Moore is tied up with the fact that what already exists is not to be affected by ethical decision; on the other hand, what can be "suggested" is entirely relevant to the concern of ethics with what ought to be. The gap is therefore that what is the case is interesting in itself but can have no bearing on what ought to be the case.

Before leaving Moore's discussion of the naturalistic fallacy, we need to look carefully at his argument concerning Kant and the attempt to establish the knowledge of ethical demands by the fact that something is willed or commanded. Here again, according to Moore, the mistake is made that "what is good" is made to seem identical with "being willed," and the identification this time between a psychological fact and the good is again fallacious. Moore's argument hinges on his interpretation of Kantian epistemology. He takes Kant to be

---

[1] Ibid., p. 121. [2] Ibid.

saying not just that "willing is a necessary condition for the cognition of goodness," but "that to will a thing, or to have a certain feeling towards a thing, is the same thing as to think it good."[1] In other words, goodness and volition are connected causally, a position Moore is prepared to accept, as well as by identification. Moore argues against Kant that Kant confuses what are psychological facts with a definition of what is good and he does so in this way: Kant takes as a model for moral knowledge what Moore considers to be an utterly false notion of ordinary knowledge, namely "that for a thing to be true is the same thing as for it to be perceived or thought of in a certain way."[2] Kant, Moore maintains, has treated moral knowledge in an analogous way and has thus made the truth of a thing's goodness dependent upon its being felt or willed in a certain way. For Moore, the truth or reality of goodness is independent of the presence in one's mind of some feeling or other; though this feeling or volition may cause one to recognise what is good in itself, it cannot be a criterion for the goodness of that object or quality.[3] Moore has attempted to show that, on the grounds of the naturalistic fallacy, metaphysics and ethics must be kept apart. The gap is therefore established between fact and value, between what is true or real and what is good or what ought to be the case.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 131.

[2] Ibid., p. 133.

[3] Ibid., p. 137-8.

It remains only for us to describe the way in which Moore believed the good in itself to be known, if it cannot be known through identifying it with any natural object or quality already known nor through metaphysical knowledge. Moore has by his criticism of other ethical systems determined the two major problems which his own view will have to meet satisfactorily. On the one hand he must indicate the way in which good can be known since our knowledge of natural or metaphysical facts cannot entail any conclusion regarding what is good in itself. On the other hand he must specify the significance of such moral knowledge both in so far as disagreement is concerned and with regard to its relevance for practical decisions about what we ought to do.

Moore appeals to experience to make his first point, that good is known by each of us to be a unique and indefinable object. This awareness of the uniqueness of good sounds very much like intuitionism and although Moore dissociated himself from several aspects of the intuitionism of his predecessors, it seems he cannot avoid resting his own understanding of moral knowledge upon the same foundation.[1] He asks each of us to reflect on the meaning of the good and would rest his case on the validity of such introspection. Yet, as W. D. Hudson has asked,

---

[1]Moore here comes close to contradicting his earlier arguments against naturalistic definitions of good, by claiming that some basic truths about good are indeed self-evident. Cf. G. J. Warnock, Contemporary Moral Philosophy (Macmillan, London, 1967), p. 4-5.

> . . . do all men have before their minds this unique object when they think about good? In order to answer that we would have to do two things: one, to decide what are the appropriate criteria for determining when a man has this unique object before his mind and when he has not; and the other, to test all men by these criteria in order to see whether or not they all do have that unique object before their minds when they think of good. It is difficult to decide what such criteria could be; and certainly no one has ever conducted the consequent investigation.[1]

Moore's appeal to our intuition of the good provides the basis of his argument regarding the Supreme Good in the final chapter of his book. Our understanding of those objects or qualities which are good in themselves is derived in the following way:

> In order to arrive at a correct decision on the first part of this question (i.e. "What things have intrinsic value . . . "), it is necessary to consider what things are such that, if they existed by themselves, in absolute isolation, we should yet judge their existence to be good; and, in order to decide upon the relative degrees of value of different things, we must similarly consider what comparative value seems to attach to the isolated existence of each.[2]

This method of reasoning is used by Moore in his critique of hedonism in which he argues that the isolation of our "consciousness of pleasure" plainly shows us that it is not the sole object which is good in itself.[3] The good is thus known by our intuition which allows us to apprehend the uniqueness of good as a quality or object and to

---

[1]W. D. Hudson, Modern Moral Philosophy (Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1970), p. 83.

[2]Moore, op. cit., p. 185.

[3]Ibid., p. 95-6.

focus our attention on those particular objects or qualities which in isolation would seem to us to belong to the Supreme Good.

However, the difficulty with Moore's statement of intuitionism is not only that there is no way of testing the truth of his fundamental premise but also that there are no objective criteria by which we might disagree about what is good in itself. Moore wants to claim on the one hand that intuitions can be true or false. His argument against naturalistic and metaphysical ethics rests on his conviction that they are based on a definition of good which does not allow any test of its own validity. However, his understanding of the Supreme Good does not allow such an objective test; indeed, can it be otherwise if intuition is the mode of apprehending the good? His argument is circular to the extent that the truth or falsity of our intuition of that which is good in itself is known by intuition itself; our intuition becomes the criterion for the truth of what we so intuit. This method of reasoning is especially clear in Moore's final chapter on "The Ideal."

> By far the most valuable things, which we know or can imagine, are certain states of consciousness, which may be roughly described as the pleasures of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects. No one, probably, who has asked himself the question, has ever doubted that personal affection and the appreciation of what is beautiful in Art or Nature, are good in themselves; nor, if we consider strictly what things are worth having <u>purely for their own sakes</u>, does it appear probable that any one will

> think that anything else has nearly so great a value as the things which are included under these two heads.[1]

Although Moore does not commit the naturalistic fallacy himself in this chapter by claiming that our agreement as to those things which we would all apprehend as being good in themselves is the definition of or the criterion for their being good in themselves, nevertheless he appeals to a mode of apprehension of good which can only be justified on its own grounds. If the metaphysical task of describing the good which is so intuited is considered irrelevant to ethics, then by what procedures can intuition correct or refine itself? Moore hopes to convince us but can offer no objective reasons for his statement that these things (that is, personal affection and beauty) are "truths" and "that they are the raison d'etre of virtue; that it is they . . . that form the rational ultimate end of human action and the sole criterion of social progress . . . ."[2] The result of Moore's rejection of any ethics guilty of committing the naturalistic fallacy is thus an intuitionist view of moral knowledge in which the gap between fact and value is affirmed and upheld.

It is therefore important at this point to describe another view of the nature of moral knowledge and decision which is a result of Moore's refutation of naturalism. The emotive theory of ethics, as J. O. Urmson has pointed out,

---

[1] Ibid., p. 188-9.

[2] Ibid., p. 189.

is based on two primary presuppositions.[1] The first has to do with a theory of meaning which was suggested by I. A. Richards and C. K. Ogden[2] and later by Susan Stebbing.[3] In both of these works the suggestion is made that some kinds of language, and ethical language in particular, have another kind of use than descriptive or scientific language. It is maintained that this use to which language is put is different than the referential one upon which Moore's rejection of naturalism is based and this use may be more appropriate to our understanding of moral language. As Hudson has argued, this view of the different uses of language is tied up with the logical positivists' claim that for propositions to be meaningful they must either be analytically true or empirically verifiable.[4] Now Moore had argued, as we have just seen,

---

[1]J. O. Urmson, The Emotive Theory of Ethics (Hutchinson University Library, London, 1968).

[2]I. A. Richards and C. K. Ogden, The Meaning of Meaning (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1923), p. 125. "'Good' is alleged to stand for a unique, unanalyzable concept . . . [which] is the subject matter of ethics. This peculiar ethical use of 'good' is, we suggest, a purely emotive use. When so used the word stands for nothing whatever, and has no symbolic function."

[3]Susan Stebbing, A Modern Introduction to Logic (Methuen, London, 1930), p. 19. "When [language] is used in order to arouse an emotional attitude in the hearer, to influence him in any way other than by giving him information, then its use is emotive."

[4]Hudson, op. cit., p. 107-11.

that propositions about the good cannot be mere tautologies because they become insignificant nor can they be subjected to an objective test of their validity such as the ones offered by empirical verification. Ayer's answer to this dilemma is to reject any possible meaning for ethical propositions at all.[1] His argument against Moore is thus a rejection of the possibility of some non-verifiable, yet synthetic, knowledge of good which has absolute validity. While accepting the gap between fact and value, Ayer rejects the possibility of some "mysterious 'intellectual intuition'" by which good is known.[2]

> A feature of this theory, which is seldom recognized by its advocates, is that it makes statements of value unverifiable. For it is notorious that what seems intuitively certain to one person may seem doubtful, or even false, to another. So that unless it is possible to provide some criterion by which one may decide between conflicting intuitions, a mere appeal to intuition is worthless as a test of a proposition's validity.[3]

The stage is now set for a description of the use to which ethical language is put if it is not to state anything significant about the nature of the world which could be shown to be true or false. In Ayer's words, " . . . we have seen that sentences which simply express moral judgments do not say anything. They are pure expressions of feeling and as such do not come under the category of

---

[1] A. J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic (Victor Gollancz, London, 1955, second edition), Chapter 6, "Critique of Ethics and Theology."

[2] Ibid., p. 106.

[3] Ibid.

truth or falsehood. They are unverifiable for the same reason as a cry of pain or a word of command is unverifiable--because they do not express genuine propositions."[1] Here we have then the statement of the emotive use to which language can be put in which the separation between fact and value is even more complete than in Moore.

This new understanding of the use of moral language is also seen as a way of avoiding the alternatives which Moore had posed for ethics and this is its second presupposition. As Urmson states this, " . . . the original ground for the proposal of the emotive theory was the need to find some way out from the unacceptable dichotomy of naturalism and non-naturalism."[2] The emotive account of morals is critical of the weak point in Moore's analysis, that moral knowledge is the intuition of a unique kind of non-natural fact, and since it accepts Moore's critique of naturalism, this emotive account is borne out of "epistemological despair."[3] As Urmson further makes clear, however, there is positive reason as well for the emergence of this account. Moore had given logical and epistemological reasons for the rejection of naturalism in favour of his account of intuitionism. The emotive account is an attempt to understand the power or "magnetism" of moral judgements which does not seem to follow

---

[1] Ibid., p. 108-9.

[2] Urmson, op. cit., p. 18.

[3] Ibid., p. 19.

logically from either the description of a set of natural facts nor the assertion of our intuitive knowledge of some non-natural facts.[1] The emotivist account is thus interested in the role which our feelings and attitudes play in moral knowledge and decision and in so describing this role will attempt to avoid the alternatives which Moore had suggested.

Both these concerns of the emotivist account can be seen in the work of C. L. Stevenson who developed an interpretation of ethics in which the naturalistic fallacy was taken seriously while an alternative to intuitionism was proposed.[2] The first premise of Stevenson's work is that ethical language is the expression of personal attitudes and these are to be distinguished from expressions of belief, which are given in factual propositions, and from expressions of emotion.[3] It is important to emphasize here, as Hudson points out, that Stevenson takes ethical language to be primarily expressive, not indicative.[4] If ethical judgements were

---

[1] Ibid., p. 20; Hudson, op. cit., p. 115.

[2] C. L. Stevenson, Ethics and Language (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1944) and Facts and Values (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1963).

[3] A fuller account of Stevenson's distinctions here between attitudes, emotions, and beliefs will be given later in our discussion of the notion of onlooks. Here we are only interested in showing how Stevenson's account reaffirms the fallacy of naturalism in ethics and yet avoids intuitionism.

[4] Hudson, op. cit., p. 117.

merely taken as reports of inner attitudes or if it were considered to be the speaker's intention to describe to others the facts of his psychological make-up, then that language would not only be guilty of reducing values to facts but it would also have been misunderstood.

> Doubtless there is always some element of description in ethical judgments, but this is by no means all. Their major use is not to indicate facts but to create an influence. Instead of merely describing people's interests they change or intensify them. They recommend an interest in an object, rather than state that the interest already exists.[1]

According to this analysis there are basically two uses to which language can be put, descriptive and expressive, or indicative and dynamic. Though ethical language is often in the form of indicative statements, its meaning, according to Stevenson, is expressive or dynamic. The model for ethical language is therefore that the proposition "This is good" means "I approve of this; do so as well."[2] The imperative function of the language is thus emphasized as the proper means of avoiding the naturalistic fallacy, in place of Moore's contention that this language is indicative of a special insight.[3]

---

[1]Stevenson, Facts and Values, p. 16. Cf. Ethics and Language, p. 33.

[2]Stevenson, Ethics and Language, p. 21. In his lack of emphasis on the descriptive elements in ethical language, Stevenson's analysis is less subtle than that of R. M. Hare, as we shall see.

[3]This imperative function is dependent upon Stevenson's analysis of the "meaning" of language in general in which the causal power of that language is the criterion by which meaning is judged. See Urmson, op. cit., chap. 4; Hudson, op. cit., p. 121-5; and Warnock, op. cit., p. 21-4.

Stevenson's discussion of the distinction between attitude and belief shows most clearly his revision of Moore. An attitude "is a disposition to act in certain ways and to experience certain feelings, rather than itself a certain action or feeling."[1] The distinction is brought out most clearly by disagreements. Here Stevenson argues that there is an independent element in ethical disagreements which cannot be settled with reference to our beliefs about the facts of the situation. In this way Stevenson hopes to show that the identification of good with some natural or metaphysical fact is fallacious, not because good is mysterious and indefinable but because its recognition is dependent upon our attitudes. The subjective element in moral judgements and practical decisions is not the personal intuition of what is good in itself, but is rather our disposition, a complicated phenomenon involving feelings, emotions, beliefs, and so on, to be for or against something. In speaking about the good, one's intention is to give approval, not to describe the object to which good is applied, nor to offer a definition of good itself. "A person who recognises X to be 'good' must ipso facto acquire a stronger

---

[1] Stevenson, Ethics and Language, p. 90. Cf. also p. 60. An attitude "designates any psychological disposition of being for or against something." Facts and Values, p. 1-2. On page 3 of Ethics and Language, in a footnote, he claims to be using this word in "the same broad sense that R. B. Perry gives to 'interest'" in his General Theory of Value (Longmans, Green, London, 1926).

tendency to act in its favor than he otherwise would have had."[1] Moore's intention to give an account of ethics which avoids the naturalistic fallacy is thus better achieved by an analysis of this subjective element and this analysis, according to Stevenson, requires that the magnetic power of ethical language and the role of attitudes in judgements and decisions be understood.[2]

The second version of the naturalistic fallacy which deserves our attention is the one suggested by David Hume in his Treatise on Human Nature.[3] In a concluding paragraph of one section Hume writes:

> In every system of morality which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark'd, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, is, and is not, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an ought, or an ought not. This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this ought or ought not, expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it should be observ'd and explain'd; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which

---

[1] Stevenson, Facts and Values, p. 13.

[2] This is the main thread of Stevenson's argument with Moore in his article, "Moore's Arguments against Certain Forms of Ethical Naturalism" in P. A. Schilpp, Ed., The Philosophy of G. E. Moore, Vol. IV of the Library of Living Philosophers (Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 1942), p. 71-90. See also Moore's "Reply to my Critics" in the same volume, p. 535-54.

[3] D. Hume, Treatise on Human Nature, Book III, Part I, trans. by L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford University Press, London, 1955).

> are entirely different from it. But as authors do not commonly use this precaution, I shall presume to recommend it to the readers; and am persuaded that this small attention wou'd subvert all the vulgar systems of morality, and let us see, that the distinction of vice and virtue is not founded merely on the relations of objects, nor is perceiv'd by reason.[1]

Hume's criticism here appears to be directed against those who would derive statements about what ought or ought not to be the case from those regarding what is or is not the case by deduction. This version of the naturalistic fallacy can therefore be labelled the "non-deducability" of good. Yet precisely what Hume meant by his criticism is still the subject of continuing debate. To understand the nature of this version of the fallacy we must therefore examine the two major lines of interpretation which are currently taken and see the consequences of each with regard to the relationship of "is" and "ought."[2]

The standard interpretation of Hume has been taken by philosophers whose views on the nature of moral language differ widely but who acknowledge the acceptance of Hume's non-deducability principle as one of the major premises of their accounts. Among the intuitionists Prichard quotes the above paragraph from Hume in his discussion of the

---

[1] Ibid., p. 469-70.

[2] A comprehensive collection of these articles is to be found in W. D. Hudson, Ed., The Is/Ought Question (Macmillan, London, 1969), Part I. The subtitle of this work indicates the importance which many moral philosophers ascribe to this fallacy; it is "A Collection of Papers on the Central Problem in Moral Philosophy." See also Hudson, op. cit., p. 249-64.

nature of moral obligation.[1] He takes Hume to be asking:

> What distinguishes our assertion, e.g., that X ought to be educating his son Y--where "ought" is being used in the moral sense--from our assertion, e.g., that X is educating his son Y?[2]

Prichard argues that there is no unique relation between X and his act of educating Y in the former assertion which is not so of the latter, as Hume suggests. "Ought" therefore does not express a different relation of subject and predicate which is not implied by "is." Rather, according to Prichard,

> . . . what seems to distinguish the second assertion from the first is that in it we are attributing to the same subject of attributes X, i.e. asserting him to possess, an attribute of a different kind, viz. that of being under an obligation to educate Y, as distinct from that of educating Y, so that Hume's question becomes: "What is the being under an obligation to do some action?" as distinct from doing some action. And if this be right, the nature of the thought which we express by a statement of the form "X ought to do so and so" is more clearly expressed by substituting a statement of the form "X is under an obligation to do so and so."[3]

It is then the nature of this obligation which Prichard will attempt to describe and in so doing will maintain that assertions about "ought" are sui generis.

Proponents of the emotive theory of ethics also appeal to Hume on their behalf. This is seen for example in the writing of Ayer, who claims:

---

[1]H. A. Prichard, Moral Obligation (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1968).

[2]Ibid., p. 92.

[3]Ibid.

> In fact the (emotivist) theory only explores the consequences of a sound and respectable point of logic which was already made by Hume; that normative statements are not derivable from descriptive statements, or, as Hume puts it, that "ought" does not follow from "is." To say that moral judgments are not fact-stating is not to say that they are unimportant, or even that there cannot be arguments in their favour. But these arguments do not work in the way that logical or scientific arguments do.[1]

Ayer's argument here and in Language, Truth and Logic rests on the interpretation of Hume as a radical sceptic who would himself have implicitly agreed with Ayer's central thesis regarding the criteria for meaning. After quoting Hume's diatribe against the writings of theology or metaphysics, Ayer asks:

> What is this but a rhetorical version of our own thesis that a sentence which does not express either a formally true proposition or an empirical hypothesis is devoid of literal significance?[2]

Whatever significance moral language is to have is due solely to its expressive value and language which expresses emotions or sentiments can surely not be derived logically from language which does not. In stressing the emotive force of ethical language and particularly its practical importance in making decisions, Ayer accepts Hume's

---

[1] A. J. Ayer, Logical Positivism (Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1959), p. 22.

[2] Ayer, loc. cit., p. 54-5. This interpretation of Hume is supported by Anthony Flew in his essay "On the Interpretation of Hume" in Philosophy, Vol. XXVIII (1963), reprinted in W. D. Hudson, The Is/Ought Question, p. 64-9. Flew's concluding sentence is: "It is just this sort of brilliant harshness which sometimes makes one want to describe the Treatise as Hume's Language, Truth and Logic."

"fallacy" as meaning that any metaphysical or even intuitionist questions involving a description of value are out of place in ethics. In his essay, "On the Analysis of Moral Judgments," he distinguishes once and for all the separate domains of descriptive and prescriptive language and turns the notion of the "non-deducability of good" to his favour in disclaiming his own account as "subjective."

> The problem is not that the subjectivist denies that certain wild, or domesticated animals, "objective values," exist and the objectivist triumphantly produces them; or that the objectivist returns like an explorer with tales from the kingdom of values and the subjectivist says he is a liar. It does not matter what the explorer finds or does not find. For talking about values is not a matter of describing what may or may not be there, the problem being whether it really is there. There is no such problem. The moral problem is: What am I to do? What attitude am I to take? And moral judgments are directives in this sense.[1]

The result of Ayer's interpretation of Hume and his acceptance of the claim that "ought" cannot be logically derived from "is" is that not only the substance but also the language of fact and value are strictly separated so that the relationship between them becomes problematic.

Stevenson was another emotivist who took Hume's discussion of "is" and "ought" to lend support to his own interpretation of ethical language. As Toulmin has pointed out, Ayer's account of ethics and Stevenson's are different and this difference is perhaps most clearly seen

---

[1] Ayer, "On the Analysis of Moral Judgments," Horizon, Vol. XX, No. 117 (1949), reprinted in Philosophical Essays (1963), p. 242.

in their interpretations of Hume's account.[1] Stevenson argues that Hume "has most clearly asked the questions that here concern us, and has most nearly reached a conclusion that the present writer can accept."[2] As opposed to Ayer, who interprets Hume as denying any role for reasonable inquiry about the facts in determining matters of morality,[3] Stevenson accuses Hume of reducing value to fact.[4] "Good" means for Hume "approved by most people"; and again, " . . . according to Hume, to recognize that something is 'good' is simply to recognize that the majority approve of it."[5] Stevenson earlier argues that Hume has made normative ethics a natural science by his assertion that the statement "Anything is good if and only if the vast majority of people, on being fully and clearly informed about it, would have approbation for it" is analytically true.[6] It is here that Stevenson's debt to Hume becomes clear for the distinction between beliefs and attitudes which Hume suggests by the words "informed" and "approbation" is taken up by Stevenson and stretched farther than Hume would have intended. Stevenson argues that Hume has not made enough of the distinction and has

---

[1] S. E. Toulmin, The Place of Reason in Ethics (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1948), Chapters 3-4.

[2] Stevenson, Ethics and Language, p. 273.

[3] Toulmin, op. cit., p. 54-5.

[4] Stevenson, Facts and Values, p. 11-14.

[5] Ibid., p. 11, 13.

[6] Stevenson, Ethics and Language, p. 276.

therefore made ethical disagreements matters which could be solved by factual information. He paraphrases Hume in the following way:

> "X is a virtue" has the same meaning as "X would be the object of approbation of almost any person who had full and clear factual information about X."[1]

Thus in Stevenson's view, Hume stresses ethical disagreements as disagreements in beliefs which, if solved, will lead to agreement about the "facts" as well as to agreement in approbation or subjective approval. He even includes Hume among the "naturalists" who, although they stress the role of attitudes in ethics, yet imply "that disagreement about what is good is disagreement in belief about attitudes."[2] In this sense, Stevenson is able to apply Moore's critique to Hume.

It is in the writings of R. M. Hare that Hume's version of the naturalistic fallacy is advocated most strongly; indeed we find him speaking of "Hume's law" with reference to the fallacy of deducing "ought" from "is."[3] He declares:

---

[1] Ibid., p. 274.

[2] Stevenson, Facts and Values, p. 3. Flew would disagree with Stevenson's interpretation here for he claims that Hume would not have distinguished what he sees to be the case through a psychological analysis of human behaviour from a logical inquiry regarding the meaning of moral language. To take Hume as saying that the meaning of ethical language is that it reports our beliefs about things, and thus that he reduces value to fact, is to take him out of his own intellectual context. Hume is thus not offering definitions but making observations. See A. Flew, op. cit., p. 68.

[3] R. M. Hare, Freedom and Reason (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1963), p. 108. Cf. also "Universalisability,"

> I have been in the past, and still am, a stout defender of Hume's doctrine that one cannot deduce moral judgements from non-moral statements of fact; and also of that particular application of the doctrine which says that one cannot deduce moral judgements of substance from statements about the uses of words or about the logical relations between concepts.[1]

In his earlier book, after arguing against two forms of moral reasoning which he claims would dispose of "the vulgar systems of morality," Hare again brings Hume to his aid. These two forms of reasoning are: 1) to regard moral principles as merely factual, and 2) to regard moral principles as self-evident.

> A few great writers, such as Aristotle, Hume, and Kant, though it is not difficult to find here and there in their works traces of these defects, can yet, if studied in the right way, be seen to avoid them in their main doctrines.[2]

Hare's use of Hume thus differs fundamentally from Stevenson's, a difference which may perhaps be due to the fact that Stevenson does not quote the passage in question in either of his books, nor in his article discussing Moore's version of the fallacy. The belief that moral arguments must be deductive is one of the major presuppositions of Hare's explanation of moral language in terms of prescriptivism, and thus he will seek an account of moral language which takes this naturalistic fallacy (and

---

Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Vol. LV (1954-55), p. 303.

[1] Ibid., p. 186-7.

[2] Hare, The Language of Morals (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1952), p. 44-5.

Moore's as well) seriously. As Hudson has rightly stated, these three different accounts of ethics do not fundamentally differ in their interpretation of the above-mentioned passage from Hume.

> Intuitionists, emotivists, and prescriptivists who cite him have taken his word "deduction" to mean logical entailment and his phrase "seems altogether inconceivable" to be a typically ironical understatement for "is altogether inconceivable." They have taken his point to be that, from the premises (i) "ought" cannot be entailed by "is" and (ii) arguments are either deductive or defective, the conclusion follows that there is an impassable logical gulf between moral judgments and statements of natural, or supernatural, fact.[1]

Now it is precisely the existence of this logical gulf which is called into question by those who would offer an alternative interpretation of Hume. Indeed these new interpretations have been a major impetus for the most recent account of moral reasoning, descriptivism, which has been suggested as an alternative to Hare's prescriptivism. It will be worthwhile to examine two of these new interpretations of Hume to complete the background for our discussion of the relationship of indicative and imperative in ethical decision.

One of these interpretations is offered by A. C. MacIntyre who contends that Hume cannot be considered justly to be "an exponent of the autonomy of morality" on the grounds of his own breach of the "Law"

---

[1]Hudson, Modern Moral Philosophy, p. 251.

now so strictly observed.[1] MacIntyre centres his criticism of the standard interpretation around a discussion of the notion of deduction in Hume's thought, a notion which he takes to mean simply "inference." If Hume does mean to say that moral conclusions, "ought," cannot be deduced from factual premises, "is," then perhaps it was his intention in his own account of morality to show how "ought" is inferred from "is." Two points are mentioned in particular to support this view. One argument is that Hume was not discussing rules of logic but was rather observing human behaviour. "His work is full of anthropological and sociological remarks, remarks sometimes ascribed by commentators to the confusion between logic and psychology with which Hume is so often credited."[2] Instead of making a logical point, Hume is offering a description of the way in which facts are relevant to moral decisions, though this relationship is not one of deduction. Therefore, and this is MacIntyre's second point, Hume need not be contradicting himself as he is considered to do on the standard interpretation. MacIntyre comes close here to the interpretation which Stevenson gives to Hume, for he says, " . . . the notion of 'ought' is for Hume only explicable in terms of the notion of a consensus of interest."[3] Therefore at the

---

[1] A. C. MacIntyre, "Hume on 'Is' and 'Ought'," Philosophical Review, Vol. LXVIII (1959), reprinted in Hudson, The Is/Ought Question, p. 36.

[2] Ibid., p. 39.

[3] Ibid., p. 40-1.

basis of Hume's explanation of morality is a "necessary truth" from which "ought" can indeed be inferred. MacIntyre then summarizes his argument in this matter by saying:

> Hume, then, in the celebrated passage does not mention entailment. What he does is to ask how and if moral rules may be inferred from factual statements, and in the rest of book III of the Treatise he provides an answer to his own question.[1]

The gap between "is" and "ought" is thus closed by Hume, according to MacIntyre, by his assertion that certain kinds of facts, i.e. those which describe our passions, needs, desires, interests, and so forth, can indeed serve as legitimate reasons for moral imperatives.[2]

Geoffrey Hunter offers another alternative interpretation of Hume in which he states even more explicitly than MacIntyre that Hume himself closed the gap between "is" and "ought" by identifying some statements of fact with moral statements. "In short," he says, "it is a central part of Hume's moral theory that moral judgements are statements of fact."[3] Thus Hume was not only unconcerned about the strict entailment of moral judgements from statements of fact, he was not speaking of an

---

[1] Ibid., p. 44.

[2] Ibid., p. 46.

[3] Geoffrey Hunter, "Hume on 'Is' and 'Ought'," Philosophy, Vol. XXXVIII (1962), reprinted in Hudson, The Is/Ought Question, p. 60. Hunter makes this statement on the basis of Hume's argument in his Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals.

inference at all; his intention was rather to show the identity of the two. The problem with such an interpretation of Hume is that it makes Hume a subjectivist in his account of morality. He would, on this reading, be saying that moral judgements and imperatives are quite simply reports on my needs, wants, or feelings and in this sense none of his interpreters would have understood him at all. In replying to Hunter's argument, Anthony Flew upholds the emotivist interpretation of Hume, suggested by Ayer, and maintains that:

> . . . Hume's central insight was: that moral judgements are not statements of either logically necessary truths or facts about the natural (or supernatural) universe around us; and, hence, that "All morality depends upon our sentiments" (Treatise, III, ii, 5).[1]

It would seem that Hunter's interpretation is an extreme one which few other commentators on the writings of Hume are prepared to take.

In the midst of this confusing array of interpretations, it is important that we clear the air somewhat by suggesting the major points which Hume's description of a naturalistic fallacy raises for our consideration of the relation of indicative and imperative. Regardless of the interpretation placed upon Hume's own intention in pointing out this particular mode of moral reasoning, that is, whether or not Hume himself considered this reasoning as fallacious, it does challenge

---

[1]Flew, op. cit., p. 66.

us to state precisely what the relationship is between propositions regarding what is the case and those regarding what ought to be the case. Questions which will be crucial to our analysis of this problem will be: whether or not the relationship between "is" and "ought" is or can be one of strict entailment; whether there can be any form of deduction in moral reasoning with premises involving both "is" and "ought"; and in what sense "ought" is separated from "is" by a logical gap in which the "autonomy of value" takes its stand.

It is surely this latter point, namely the autonomy of value or the autonomy of good, which has become a major issue in contemporary discussions of moral reasoning and which will be in the foreground of our considerations here. In particular such a gap between fact and value poses problems for an analysis of religious ethical systems. It will be necessary for us to consider in our analysis the nature of the claim that the will of God is good, as well as the notion that goodness has something to do with the law inherent in man's nature. Secondly, the gap between propositions containing "is" and those containing "ought" presents problems to those religious ethicists who would derive some imperatives for action from statements of what is the case or who would offer as a reason for some moral action the fact that something is true or possible. This analysis can only be done adequately when we have examined the validity of the two versions of the naturalistic fallacy in decision-making and to this task we now turn.

CHAPTER II

THE PRESCRIPTIVIST ACCOUNT OF ETHICAL DECISION

The naturalistic fallacy in both its versions has been considered relevant to an account of moral reasoning by some modern moral philosophers who have attempted to describe that reasoning in such a way as to avoid committing the fallacy. Other moral philosophers have accounted for moral reasoning in order to show that both versions of the fallacy are misleading and could distort an accurate description of practical moral decision-making. These two differing views of moral reasoning have been labelled "prescriptivism" and "descriptivism." Let us therefore consider the way in which each view characterises moral decision and in particular the relationship between indicative and imperative which is central to that decision. Then we will be able to compare the two views both with regard to the naturalistic fallacy and with regard to the adequacy of the description of decision-making which is offered.

The prescriptivist account is linked most closely with the work of R. M. Hare. In numerous articles and in his two major books, Hare has sought to take seriously the charges of the naturalistic fallacy and, at the same

time, to extend the emotivist account of morality as given by Stevenson. Of primary importance in this pursuit has been Hare's understanding of the nature of language in general and the character of moral language in particular, an understanding from which the term prescriptivism is derived. In giving his account of the language of morals, Hare is concerned to avoid two dangers which threaten our analysis of this language and therefore do not render an accurate picture of decision-making. On the one hand, his concern is that moral language be considered both meaningful and valid. His argument here is against those verificationists like Ayer who argue that "moral judgements do not ordinarily function in the same way as the class of indicative sentences marked out by . . . verification-criterion,"[1] and, because of this, have no meaning or validity. Hare maintained that such a narrow definition of the criterion for meaning could distort our normal use of words in the moral and non-moral spheres. He understands the verificationists to be saying that "a sentence does not have meaning unless there is something that would be the case if it were true."[2] However,

> if this criterion of meaningfulness, which is useful in the case of statements of fact, is applied indiscriminately to types of utterance which are not intended to express statements of fact, trouble will result. Imperative sentences

---

[1]Hare, Language of Morals, p. 9.

[2]Ibid., p. 8.

> do not satisfy this criterion, and it may be that sentences expressing moral judgements do not either; but this only shows that they do not express statements in the sense defined by the criterion, and this sense may be a narrower one than that of normal usage. It does not mean that they are meaningless, or even that their meaning is of such a character that no logical rules can be given for their employment.[1]

The consequence of this view is that only sentences in the indicative mood have been subjected to a logical inquiry, while all other sentences are called "'emotive,' 'non-fact-stating,' 'evocative,' etc. The latter are held not to state genuine propositions, and therefore, since propositions are the bricks out of which a logical system is built, to be altogether beyond the pale of such a system."[2] Hare maintained that such an exclusion was not appropriate to increasing our understanding of a great portion of the language we use. He states that

> . . . it is an important discovery, if true, that ethical sentences do not tell us that something is the case; but the right thing to do after making such a discovery is to ask what they do tell us, and how to frame them so that this telling is done without ambiguities and contradictions; in fact, to find out what are the logical rules for talking ethically.[3]

The thrust of Hare's work then is to expand the notion of linguistic meaning from one based on reference to one determined by use so that the meaning of ethical language

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] Hare, "Imperative Sentences," Mind, Vol. LVIII (1949), p. 21.

[3] Ibid., p. 23.

becomes clear and, further, to develop the logical rules by which the validity of such language can be judged.

The second danger which Hare recognised is a consequence of this first, namely, the attempt of Stevenson and the emotivists to describe moral language as both expressive and as having causal power. As we have seen, Ayer had suggested the expressive nature of moral language as a refutation of "mysterious intuitionism."[1] However, Hare finds this notion confusing. He claims,

> . . . to say that imperatives express wishes may lead the unwary to suppose that what happens when we use one, is this: we have welling up inside us a kind of longing, to which, when the pressure gets too great for us to bear, we give vent by saying an imperative sentence.[2]

Hare considered it not only misleading to think of moral language as expressing a kind of "warm feeling" within us, but also question-begging in that it is the meaning of the sentence itself which needs to be understood. He argues this also against the claim that moral language expresses our attitude of approval towards something, a view which he considers not implausible, but simply not able to cope with the philosophical complexities which arise from it.

---

[1]See above, p. 17-18.

[2]Hare, Language of Morals, p. 10. Cf. also his argument regarding an expression of emotion, such as David's plea, "Would God I had died for you, O Absalom, my son, my son," which differs markedly from such a "dull command" as "Come in" in which the expression of emotion may be minimal. "Imperative Sentences," p. 38-9.

> Sentences containing the word "approve" are so difficult of analysis that it seems perverse to use this notion to explain the meaning of moral judgements which we learn to make years before we learn the word "approve"; and similarly, it would be perverse to explain the meaning of the imperative mood in terms of wishing or any other feeling or attitude; for we learn how to respond to and use commands long before we learn the comparatively complex notions of "wish," "desire," "aversion," etc.[1]

The danger Hare saw in such a view is that it could lead one to assume the irrationality of language if such language is derived from feelings, emotions, attitudes and so forth. As Hare argues throughout his writings, morality is a rational matter and to view it as simply a way of expressing our attitudes of approval is to reduce its seriousness and to exclude the possibility of reasonable moral argument.[2] He claims,

> . . . it is not surprising that the first effect of modern logical researches was to make some philosophers despair of morals as a rational activity. It is the purpose of this book to show that their despair was premature.[3]

The second problem with the emotivist account is the confusion which results when the psychological cause for the uttering of moral sentences is confused with and indeed taken as the criterion for the meaning of these

---

[1] Ibid., p. 12.

[2] Hare, Freedom and Reason, p. 2-3. Hare considers, as Hudson has pointed out, that Stevenson's emotive account results in the fundamental irrationality of moral language for which reasoned arguments are not appropriate. Modern Moral Philosophy, p. 155-9. Cf. Hare, "Freedom of the Will," The Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume XXV (1951), p. 210-11.

[3] Hare, Language of Morals, p. 45.

sentences themselves. Indeed the confusion is carried even further by the notion that moral language has the causal power to evince, evoke, stimulate, or arouse in the hearer as well a feeling or attitude of moral approval. Here not only is the issue of freedom in formulating moral judgements raised, but also the definition of meaning in terms of the effects of language is questioned. Hare argues that "The processes of telling someone to do something, and getting him to do it, are quite distinct, logically, from each other."[1] To confuse the two notions is to confuse moral language with propaganda and to rate the validity of a moral imperative on the basis of its ability to persuade or galvanize into action.[2] Moral language is really more like advice than persuasion, the fundamental difference being stated as follows:

> . . . to say "I advise you . . ." is all that is required in order to advise, just as to say, in due form, "I promise . . ." is all that is required in order to promise. Advising is a purely linguistic performance. On the other hand, to say "I persuade . . ." would not be all that was required in order to persuade; to persuade, we have to bring about an effect, a change in the hearer's behaviour; if we do not bring about an effect, we have not persuaded him, and bringing about an effect is not just talking, but something further.[3]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 13.

[2] Ibid., p. 14-15. See also "Freedom of the Will," p. 211-12.

[3] Hare, "Freedom of the Will," p. 207.

In persuasion, the success of the utterance constitutes its validity, and it is contradicted not by being false, nor by reasons which do not support it, but by its failure to have the intended effect. Hare argues for the advice-model of moral language because it is this which appeals to the freedom and rationality of the moral agent.[1] However, he also contends that, if taken too seriously, the definition of meaning in terms of its causal efficacy can become a reductio ad absurdum. For, is it not the intention of all our language to have some kind of effect, or to alter in some way the relationship with our hearers? If this is so, then what is being said about moral language in particular except that it participates in this fact of language in general?

> In the weak sense, a sentence might be said to be evocative if it is intended to, or does, produce <u>any</u> change in the hearer's state of mind or behaviour. In this sense it would be hard to find any sentence that was not evocative. At the least, a sentence that is heard and understood must produce the dispositional property called "understanding the sentence."[2]

Hare's argument against the emotivists is therefore that either they are not saying anything important or unique about moral language itself, or they have lumped it together with propaganda as a technique of psychological persuasion from which moral language requires, logically, to be separated. It is just this which Hare will attempt to do in his own account of prescriptivism.

---

[1] <u>Ibid.</u>

[2] Hare, "Imperative Sentences," p. 39.

A prescription is an answer to the question, "What shall I do?" and it is this practical purpose which is served by moral language. Both value judgements and imperatives, the two major classifications of moral language, are used to prescribe some course of action or some attitude and the meaning of these forms of language should be judged in terms of this use. Hare defines prescribing as "giving advice or instruction, or in general . . . guiding choices,"[1] and this function can be served both by imperatives telling what one ought to do or by value-words commending some object or action. This notion of prescriptivity is Hare's way of avoiding a definition of the uniqueness of moral language either in terms of some set of facts which entail some moral quality or in terms of some intuition regarding the unique objects or qualities of morality. Both value judgements and imperatives "have it as their distinctive function either to commend or in some other way to guide choices or actions; and it is this essential feature which defies any analysis in purely factual terms."[2] If the prescriptive function of moral language is its primary function, more basic than its descriptive function, and is the reason for the "supervenience" of this language, then the relation between prescribing and describing needs to be further elucidated.

[1]Hare, Language of Morals, p. 155.

[2]Ibid., p. 171.

It is in Hare's discussion of value judgements that he addresses himself to this relationship for evaluation is one form of prescription. He states,

> there are two sorts of things that we can say, for example, about strawberries; the first sort is usually called descriptive, the second sort evaluative. Examples of the first sort of remark are, "This strawberry is sweet" and "This strawberry is large, red, and juicy." Examples of the second sort of remark are "This is a good strawberry" and "This strawberry is just as strawberries ought to be."[1]

There are two important features of the relationship between these sorts of statements, between, let us say, "This strawberry is sweet," and "This is a good strawberry." The first is that we often use the descriptive statement as a reason for making the evaluative statement; when asked why some strawberry is good, we can legitimately reply by making a factual statement about it, namely, that it is sweet. However, and this is the second feature of the relationship, we do not simply mean by "good" the fact that the strawberry is sweet. The intention of our evaluative statement is to commend the strawberry and this commending extends beyond a mere description of the strawberry. Hare explains this second feature using another example:

> If "P is a good picture" is held to mean the same as "P is a picture and P is C," then it will become impossible to commend pictures for being C; it will be possible only to say that they are C . . . this (sic) is because, whatever defining characteristics we choose, this objection arises, that we can no longer commend an object for possessing those characteristics.[2]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 111.

[2] Ibid., p. 85.

This indeed would be to commit Moore's version of the naturalistic fallacy, by identifying "good" with some set of defining characteristics; but, for Hare, the reason this identification is fallacious is because "good" is used for commending and to commend is to do more than describe.

> Value-terms have a special function in language, that of commending; and so they plainly cannot be defined in terms of other words which themselves do not perform this function; for if this is done, we are deprived of a means of performing the function.[1]

Any attempt to reduce value judgements to descriptions is therefore to be avoided.

However, value judgements and descriptions (which Hare will later call descriptive judgements)[2] do have common features which indicate a close relationship between an object's characteristics and our evaluation of it. Both the statements, "This strawberry is sweet" and "This is a good strawberry," "can be, and often are, used for conveying information of a purely factual or descriptive character."[3] Assuming a common standard of judgement, one for determining the sweetness of fruit and the other for determining its goodness, these two statements can tell us something about the object in question. Secondly, Hare points out that both statements can teach how such words as "sweet" and "good" are to be used and

---

[1] Ibid., p. 91.

[2] Hare, Freedom and Reason, p. 10.

[3] Hare, Language of Morals, p. 112.

thus, in some sense, to give the meaning of these words.[1] Thirdly, value-words and descriptive terms share a tendency to "vary as regards the exactitude or vagueness of the information which they do or can convey."[2] In this sense, therefore, value words are not necessarily more vague than descriptive ones, nor do we need to rely on some moral intuition to learn the criteria for their applicability. What Hare has done in his analysis of evaluative language is to show that its uniqueness lies in its ability to commend objects or recommend courses of action but that this uniqueness in no way separates evaluative language completely from descriptive. "The truth in naturalism," Hare claims, "is that moral terms do indeed have descriptive meaning. It is not the only element in their meaning, and it is therefore misleading to refer to it, as do the naturalists, as the meaning of of a moral term . . . ."[3]

The relationship of describing to evaluating, or the relationship of matters of fact to those of value, is perhaps best seen in Hare's description of the logic of practical reason. The importance of reason in moral matters, or any other matters of practical concern, lies

---

[1] Ibid., p. 113-14. Hare warns against taking this phrase "the meaning of" too strictly for we can only explain the meaning of good in terms of "conveying or setting forth the standard of goodness . . ." with regard to strawberries for example.

[2] Ibid., p. 114.

[3] Hare, Freedom and Reason, p. 21.

precisely in the ability to give reasons for commending something and these reasons are in the form of the non-moral properties of the object or action in question.[1] Factual matters, or descriptions of things, are therefore closely bound up with value judgements and can serve as legitimate reasons for prescriptions. There are, in other words, characteristics of objects or actions which can be called "good-making characteristics," in the absence of which a positive word of commendation would not be appropriate.[2] "These are the properties which constitute that about the object which makes it a suitable object for the application of this moral predicate."[3] These criteria for the applicability of the value word, "good" for example, are learned in a social context and may indeed need to be learned anew for each class of objects which we evaluate. What is important to remember, Hare argues, is that the meaning of "good" which is its ability to commend, must be distinguished from the criteria for its use; we can know that to use this word is to commend something, but the particular criteria for

---

[1]This is obviously to reject a strict Humean interpretation of reason as "the discovery of truth and falsehood." See the comparison of Hare and Hume regarding "practical reason" in Roy Edgley, Reason in Theory and Practice (Hutchinson University Library, London, 1969), p. 20-8.

[2]Hare, Language of Morals, p. 94.

[3]Hare, Freedom and Reason, p. 20.

applying it to one object or another must be learned and may even be disputed or changed.[1] It is the criteria for using value words, criteria such as "intrinsic worth," "instrumentality," or "functional worth," which can be confused or even identified with the meaning of these words, and to do this is to commit the fallacy of naturalism.[2] Thus, to continue our example, to know that the characteristics red, juicy, sweet, plump, and so forth are the properties by virtue of which we call a strawberry "good" is to understand the factual or descriptive reasons which underly an evaluative judgement.

Hare continues his analysis of this relationship, however, until two more aspects of it become clear. On the one hand, the relationship between these characteristics and the value-word "good" is not one of entailment. In this respect, Hare maintains his fundamental agreement with Hume's version of the naturalistic fallacy. The relationship between the statement, "This strawberry is sweet," and "This is a good strawberry" is not that the former entails the latter.

> The problem may also be put in this way: if we knew all the descriptive properties which a

---

[1]Hare, Language of Morals, see especially Chapter 6.

[2]Hudson states this point: "To recall Moore's point against the naturalists, whatever reason is given why something is good (i.e., whatever descriptive meaning the word may have) it is always open to a reformer to propose a new standard of goodness (i.e. a new descriptive meaning). There is no standard, S, such that 'Whatever is an instance of S is good' is tautologous. 'Is whatever is an instance of S good?' always makes sense." Op. cit., p. 174.

> particular strawberry had (knew, of every descriptive sentence relating to the strawberry, whether it was true or false), and if we knew also the meaning of the word "good," then what else should we require to know, in order to be able to tell whether a strawberry was a good one? . . . We should require to be given the major premiss.[1]

This major premise, which would give the criteria for the use of "good" with regard to strawberries, can be called a principle and could be stated in the following form: "All strawberries which are red, juicy, sweet, or plump are good strawberries." This standard for judgement is a necessary part of the move from descriptive characteristics to the application of value-words and illustrates the kind of logical relations which, Hare claimed, are appropriate to one type of moral language, value judgements. For here we see that an inference is possible in moral language and an inference which satisfies the normal rules of assertoric logic. From the major premise stated above and the minor premise, "This particular strawberry is sweet," we are entitled to draw the conclusion that "This strawberry is good."[2] The inference is only valid when this major premise is present; the description of the characteristic alone cannot entail the conclusion of a value-judgement.

---

[1]Hare, Language of Morals, p. 111.

[2]Ibid., p. 145-6. Since the major portion of Hare's discussion of inference from principles has to do with the other primary form of moral language, imperatives, we will reserve a more complete discussion of this matter for the second half of this chapter.

On the other hand, the descriptive characteristics which furnish the criteria for the applicability of a value-word also serve as the basis for the universalisability of that standard of judgement. In other words, the reasons which are given for calling this particular strawberry good must be capable of being generalised to include all strawberries which are like this one in the relevant respects. This is true of moral judgements in the same sense as it is true for descriptive judgements; "in so far as moral judgements do have descriptive meaning, in addition to the other kind of meaning which they have, they share this characteristic, which is common to all judgements which carry descriptive meaning."[1] Hare appeals here to a general rule of language, that to know something is "X" is to be committed to the view that anything like it in the relevant respects would also be "X". This same holds true of value judgements; " . . . when one has been delivered, e.g., 'X is good,' it is: (a) always logically legitimate to ask why X is good; and (b) never logically legitimate, when the answer is given, to deny that anything else like X in the relevant respects is also good."[2] Here again the distinction between meaning and criteria is important for the principle which states the criteria and which is universalisable does not give a definition of "good." The fallacy of naturalism is to consider this principle "a descriptive meaning-rule which exhausts the

---

[1]Hare, Freedom and Reason, p. 10.

[2]Hudson, op. cit., p. 182.

meaning of the moral term used; whereas in my own view the rule, though it is very analogous to a descriptive meaning-rule, and though, therefore, it is quite legitimate to speak of the 'descriptive meaning' of moral terms, does not exhaust their meaning."[1] In Hare's account, this principle is a synthetic statement giving the criteria by which reasons for the applicability of value-words might be judged and, because of this, its universalisability is a logical fact which one who chooses the principle is bound logically to accept as well.

In Hare's discussion of value judgements as one type of moral language, he has argued for the extension of the class of sentences called indicative statements to include those indicatives in which an evaluation is given. These indicatives are distinguishable by their use, which is to commend or prescribe, but they share with descriptive indicatives enough characteristics to be included in the rules of normal assertoric logic. Every value judgement, whether it be an explicit one containing "good" or "right" or a more subtle one using words like "tidy," "industrious," "friendly," and so forth, has descriptive meaning and each is logically entailed by a minor premise stating the facts or describing the object in question and by a major premise in which the standard of judgement is given. Reasoning about value judgements is therefore syllogistic reasoning in which an evaluative premise, i.e. the standard of judgement, and a factual premise entail

---

[1]Hare, Freedom and Reason, p. 21.

the evaluative conclusion. In this sense, Hare accepts "the idea that rules of inference are analytic and therefore verbal, not substantive, so that the meaning of the conclusion of a valid argument must be contained in the meaning of the premises: all valid inferences, and in general all logical relations, are analytic or deductive."[1] Hare does not deny, as we have seen, that practical judgements cannot validly be inferred from descriptive premises, which he interprets Hume to be saying.[2] What he does deny is that this excludes moral language from having logical relations at all and particularly from functioning in valid inferences. That such inferences are valid, deductive ones is due to the descriptive meaning of value-judgements and principles which, though it is secondary to the evaluative meaning, allows one to reason from mixed premises to an evaluative conclusion on the basis of the meaning of terms alone.

We have seen how Hare was able to argue his case with regard to value judgements which bear a good deal of resemblance to factual indicative statements. This thesis is much more difficult to show with regard to moral imperatives, the other major classification of moral language, and therefore we need to examine the notion of the practical or imperative inference as Hare interprets it. In his article, "Imperative Sentences," Hare claims that

---

[1] Edgley, op. cit., p. 21. See also Hare, Language of Morals, p. 32-3.

[2] See above, p. 29.

"sentences are traditionally divided into three classes, statements, commands, and questions."[1] It is his intention in discussing the imperative mood to deal with the second category, commands, to describe them in both their singular and universal forms, and to outline the relationship between indicatives and imperatives. The form of language which is used for expressing statements is called indicative; that form which is used for expressing commands is called imperative. Hare claims that:

> Both are used for talking about a subject-matter, but they are used for talking about it in different ways. The two sentences "You are going to shut the door" and "Shut the door" are both about your shutting the door in the immediate future; but what they say about it is quite different. An indicative sentence is used for telling someone that something is the case; an imperative is not--it is used for telling someone to make something the case.[2]

An imperative sentence is one which arises out of a situation of dilemma in which a choice must be made and it indicates, when spoken, the decision that has been made by the speaker. Imperatives are therefore related to action while indicatives are not; or in Aristotle's terminology, imperatives have to do with praxis and poiesis while indicatives are concerned with theoria.

> An indicative sentence is an answer to the question "What is the case?"; an imperative sentence is an answer to the question "What is to be the case?" or "What am I to make the case?". The

---

[1] Hare, "Imperative Sentences," p. 24.

[2] Hare, Language of Morals, p. 5.

> first question presupposes that there is some unalterable fact to be stated; the second question, on the contrary, presupposes that there is a choice between alternative facts, i.e., between alternative courses of action. To ask the second sort of question is to deliberate; to answer it is either to choose, if the question was asked about our own action, or to command, if it was asked about someone else's.[1]

We have here a general description of imperatives as answers to the practical question "What shall I do?" and these are relevant both to one's own decision and action as well as to that of others, in which case imperatives take the form of advice.[2]

It is in comparing and contrasting the imperative and the indicative that the characteristics of imperatives as a grammatical form are brought out. In his earlier article, Hare compared the two sentences:

(1) Mary, please show Mrs. Prendergast her room.
(2) Mary will show you your room, Mrs. Prendergast.

Both sentences have a common element which can be called the "descriptor" in which the sentence performs its descriptive function. In this case, that descriptor is "Showing of her room to Mrs. Prendergast by Mary at time t."[3] In his later book, Hare changed the terminology and

---

[1]Hare, "Imperative Sentences," p. 25.

[2]Basil Mitchell raises objections here to Hare's definition of imperatives claiming that it is too broad; many other forms of sentence besides commands can supply answers to the question "What shall I do?" and the function of imperatives in giving advice can also be performed by other grammatical forms. These criteria alone therefore are perhaps necessary but are not sufficient for understanding precisely what imperatives are. "Varieties of Imperative," The Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume XXXI (1957), p. 175-190.

[3]Hare, "Imperative Sentences," p. 27.

referred to this descriptor as the "phrastic," a word derived from the Greek, meaning "to point out or indicate."[1] This phrastic in an indicative sentence "is what would be the case if the sentence were true" and in an imperative sentence "what would be the case if it were obeyed."[2] In pointing out this common element, Hare is concerned to show that imperatives and indicatives alike have descriptive meaning, and both can be judged for meaningfulness on the basis of the referent so described. He is in agreement with the verificationists to the extent that a sentence must have descriptive meaning if it is to be used for "the conveying of information or orders" but he does not accept the corresponding notion "that sentences which are not true-or-false are meaningless, even descriptively."[3] On the basis of this analysis, Hare will argue for the inclusion of imperatives in the rules of normal assertoric logic, particularly those of inference and entailment.[4]

The second element which is present in these two sentences is, however, one which the indicative and the

---

[1]Hare, Language of Morals, p. 17-18.

[2]Hare, "Imperative Sentences," p. 29.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Arguments for a special logic to deal with imperative inference can be found in B. A. O. Williams, "Imperative Inference," Analysis, Supplementary Volume 23 (1963), p. 30-42; P. T. Geach, "Imperative and Deontic Logic," Analysis, Vol. 18, Part 3 (1958), p. 49-56; A. Ross, "Imperatives and Logic," Philosophy of Science, Vol. 11 (1944), p. 30-46.

imperative do share with each other but which determines the distinctive mood of the sentence. Our two sentences could be written:

(1.1) Showing of her room to Mrs. Prendergast by Mary at time t, please.
(2.1) Showing of her room to Mrs. Prendergast by Mary at time t, yes.

Hare begins by calling this second element, that is the words "yes" and "please," by the name "dictor" since "it is they that really do the saying (the commanding, stating, etc.) which a sentence does."[1] Later, he changed this term to "neustic," again from the Greek meaning "to nod assent."[2] It is only by this element that the indicative and imperative differ from one another in that, what constitutes assent to these sentences is different in each case.

> If we assent to a statement we are said to be sincere in our assent if and only if we believe that it is true (believe what the speaker has said). If, on the other hand, we assent to a second-person command addressed to ourselves, we are said to be sincere in our assent if and only if we do or resolve to do what the speaker has told us to do; if we do not do it but only only resolve to do it later, then if, when the occasion arises for doing it, we do not do it, we are said to have changed our mind; we are no longer sticking to the assent which we previously expressed.[3]

---

[1]Hare, "Imperative Sentences," p. 28.

[2]Hare, Language of Morals, p. 18. Assent to this second example requires obedience so that it will be true in a future state of affairs. Hare has since then changed the term again to "tropic." See A. J. Kenny, "Practical Inference," Analysis, Vol. 26, No. 3 (1966), p. 68; Hudson, op. cit., p. 231-4; Hudson gives a more complete statement of Hare's revision of terms in as yet unpublished writings.

[3]Ibid., p. 19-20.

The neustic element in the imperative sentence indicates the unique function of moral language to advise or commend; in the case of commands, "please" is indicative of the attempt to effect action by "inducing the recipient to a deliberate, intentional response."[1] What constitutes assent in the case of indicatives is therefore belief; in imperatives, assent requires and entails action.[2]

This understanding of the phrastic and neustic elements in indicative and imperative sentences explains Hare's disagreement with two attempts to reduce imperatives to indicatives, for in both attempts this unique neustic element is overlooked. The first attempt is made by those who claim that imperatives are really indicative statements regarding the subjective state of mind of the speaker. Thus, the command "Shut the door" is represented as being equivalent to "I want you to shut the door." What is misunderstood by this view, according to Hare, is that the phrastic of the imperative refers to the shutting of the door; it has the same referent as the phrastic of the indicative "You are going to shut the door." Hare remarks that "In both cases it seems strange to represent a remark about shutting the door as a remark about what is

---

[1]Nicholas Rescher, The Logic of Commands (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966), p. 29.

[2]The problem involved in claiming that actions can be entailed in inferences and that they can be conclusions in practical syllogisms has been discussed by Edgley, op. cit.

going on in my mind."[1] Furthermore, this claim does not really serve to explain anything about imperatives at all for the question still remains as to the logic of the sentence "I want you to shut the door." Hare claims that "unless we understand 'Shut the door' we are unlikely to understand 'I want you to shut the door.'"[2] For this purpose, an analysis of imperatives qua imperatives is necessary and nothing has been accomplished by their reduction to indicative sentences.[3]

Secondly, it might be claimed that the command "Shut the door" means the same as "Either you are going to shut the door, or X will happen."[4] This "either/or" statement refers to the consequences of the shutting or not shutting of the door, consequences such as pleasure or avoidance of pain, and what is meant by the command "Shut the door" can really be stated without any loss of meaning by stating what the action of shutting the door is conducive to. In many cases, however, the consequences

---

[1] Hare, Language of Morals, p. 6.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 6-7. Hare turns this same objection against the approval theory of value-judgements by which the sentence "A is right" is represented as equivalent to "I approve of A." Thus, "If I ask 'Do I approve of A?' my answer is a moral decision, not an observation of introspectible fact."

[4] Ibid., p. 7. Hare refers here to an article by H. G. Bohnert, "The Semiotic Status of Commands," Philosophy of Science, Vol. 12 (1945), p. 302-315.

are not so easily recognisable and such a theory becomes implausible. Furthermore, as Hare argues, the consequences themselves are considered good or bad as a result of value judgements and, in the end, even this theory requires an investigation of the logic of prescriptive language. To understand that the statement "Either you are going to shut the door or it will become very cold in this room" has the same imperative force as the command "Shut the door" depends upon our understanding of the value judgement attached to the coldness of rooms, so that, again, nothing has been gained by the attempted reduction.[1]

Having shown the similarities and differences between indicative and imperative sentences and having broken down the content of each into the two elements, phrastic and neustic, Hare then proceeds to describe the way in which imperatives may be inferred from other imperatives, as well as from premises containing both indicatives and imperatives. It is by virtue of the descriptive element in imperatives, that is the phrastic, that logical entailment relations are possible among them and that they are capable of contradicting one another.[2]

[1] Ibid., p. 7-8. Obviously then if the either/or statement is not understood to have imperative force then something has been lost in the translation and an equivalence of meaning has not been achieved. Other attempts to reduce imperatives to indicatives can be found in P. T. Geach, op. cit., an attempt which he later claimed to be mistaken (see his reply to Williams' article, op. cit., p. 37-42); P. C. Gibbons, "Imperatives and Indicatives," The Australasian Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 38, Nos. 2-3 (1960), p. 107-19, 207-17.

[2] Ibid., p. 23. Hare gives an example from

Hare defines entailment in the following way:

> A sentence P entails a sentence Q if and only if the fact that a person assents to P but dissents from Q is sufficient criterion for saying that he has misunderstood one or other of the sentences.[1]

Hare offers as an example of such entailment with regard to imperatives the following:

> Suppose I say to someone, "Use an axe or a saw," and then, fearing that he may cut off his leg, say "No, don't use an axe." He will, without further instruction, infer that he is to use a saw. This syllogism, translated, becomes,
>
> Use of axe or saw by you shortly, please.
> No use of axe by you shortly, please.
> Use of saw by you shortly, please.[2]

It was Hare's contention that the validity of this syllogism is due to the entailment relations between the phrastics of these commands; the neustic could therefore be either yes or please without fundamentally altering the logical relations at all. "Thus most inferences are inferences from descriptor to descriptor, and we could add whichever set of dictors we pleased."[3] The entailment relation of imperatives may be formally stated as follows:

> Let C be a command, and let S be a statement with the same descriptor. Let $c_1 c_2 \ldots c_n$ be commands which can be inferred from C (i.e. whose descriptors describe states of affairs

---

Viscount Cunningham's A Sailor's Odyssey (p. 162) in which two commands are given simultaneously: "Hard 'a port" and "Hard 'a starboard." These commands are contradictory in the same way as two indicative statements, such as "You are going to turn hard 'a port" and "You are going to turn hard 'a starboard." The conjunction of the two commands is self-contradictory.

[1] Ibid., p. 25.

[2] Hare, "Imperative Sentences," p. 31.

[3] Ibid., p. 33.

> which logically must be the case if the state of affairs described by the descriptor of C is the case); analogously for S and $s_1 s_2 \ldots s_n$. Then if we command C we command $c_1 c_2 \ldots c_n$; that is to say, if we command to be the case what is described by the descriptors of C, we command to be the case what is described by the descriptors of $c_1 c_2 \ldots c_n$.[1]

The inferences containing mixed premises are the other form of imperative inference which Hare analysed and it is from Aristotle's notion of the practical syllogism that he derives his understanding of this form of moral reasoning. Hare suggests in his article on "Imperative Sentences" that such a syllogism is possible, but it is not until The Language of Morals that he offers a complete analysis of this inference.[2] There are two imperatives which may serve as the major premise of such a syllogism: one of them is a universal imperative and the other is a practical principle. An example of a universal imperative is "Take all the boxes to the station" from which many singular commands may be derived (e.g. "Take this box to the station," "Take that box to the station," and so forth). Practical principles are a form of universal imperative and often contain the word "ought"; since they are a form of prescriptive language they are intended

---

[1] Ibid., p. 32. A possible misunderstanding is here clarified by Hare as he points out that we cannot deduce some commands, obey them, and assume that we have fulfilled the original command, any more than we can verify some of the statements entailed by S and assume that we have verified S itself. We can, however, infer "that unless we fulfill at least the deduced commands we have not done all that we were told to do." Cf. A. Ross, op. cit., p. 41ff.

[2] Ibid., p. 34.

to guide actions and decisions and can therefore also be called principles of conduct. Examples might be: "Never tell lies," or "Love your neighbour as yourself." Hare considered it a matter of definition that universal imperatives and principles entail imperatives or simple commands; if prescriptive language is to be action-guiding then by definition it must entail imperatives by which one decides on a course of action. Hare claims:

> I propose to say that the test, whether someone is using the judgement "I ought to do X" as a value-judgement or not is, "Does he or does he not recognize that if he assents to the judgement, he must also assent to the command "Let me do X"?[1]

The precise way in which such a singular command is assented to, and thereby a decision rendered regarding some future action or attitude, is in Hare's view best understood with reference to the practical syllogism.

The minor premise of the syllogism can be an indicative sentence which describes particular facts and therefore furnishes the context for the conclusion which is drawn. This premise together with the principle or universal imperative entail the imperative conclusion. Such a syllogism would look like:

1) Take all the boxes to the station.
   This is one of the boxes.
   Take this box to the station.

2) Never tell lies.
   This particular statement is a lie.
   Do not say this particular statement.

3) Love your neighbour as yourself.
   This man is your neighbour.
   Love this man as you love yourself.

---

[1]Hare, Language of Morals, p. 168-9.

It is possible to see now that Hare considered such imperative inferences as valid deductions and as being purely analytic in character; that is, the validity of the deduction is dependent upon the meaning of the terms involved.[1]

> If we had to find out whether someone knew the meaning of the word "all" in "Take all the boxes to the station," we should have to find out whether he realized that a person who assented to this command, and also to the statement "This is one of the boxes" and yet refused to assent to the command "Take this to the station" could only do so if he had misunderstood one of these three sentences. If this sort of test were inapplicable the word "all" (in imperatives as in indicatives) would be entirely meaningless.[2]

Likewise, as we have already mentioned, to understand the meaning of either of the practical principles in 2) and 3) above is to understand both that they are prescriptive (i.e. action-guiding) and that this guidance is in the form of singular imperatives addressed to oneself or others which are entailed by the principles.

It remains to be stated precisely what the rules for such practical inferences are. The first is:

> No indicative conclusion can be validly drawn from a set of premisses which cannot be validly drawn from the indicatives among them alone.[3]

The justification of this rule is again the presupposition that deductive inferences are analytic.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 32-3.

[2] Ibid., p. 25.

[3] Ibid., p. 28.

> We have, therefore, to say that there must be nothing said in the conclusion which is not said implicitly or explicitly in the premisses, except what can be added solely on the strength of definitions of terms.[1]

This rule would eliminate the possibility of drawing the conclusion in example 1) above, "You will take this box to the station." To draw this conclusion is to add something which is not implicit or explicit in the premises. This rule has been criticised by N. Rescher who claims that some indicative statements can be validly inferred from imperatives. From the imperative "John, drive your car home" we might derive the indicative "John owns a car"; from the principle "Never do anything illegal" and the command "Don't do A" we can validly infer that "A is illegal."[2] In both cases, these indicative conclusions are implicit in the imperatives since they are the presuppositions for these imperatives being given and therefore Hare's rule does not exclude their valid inference.

It is Hare's second rule which "is the logical mainstay of his moral philosophy"[3] and which is indicative

---

[1] Ibid., p. 33. This again is to revise the notion that valid inferences are only possible for statements whose truth-value is known or can be discovered, for clearly this cannot be done with imperatives. Logical relations among imperatives are based on consistency or "command coverage." See Edgley, op. cit., p. 31-33, and Rescher, op. cit., Chapter 6.

[2] Rescher, op. cit., p. 92-3, 96-7. This second example will only work against Hare if the injunction, "Don't do A!" carries moral force, for it could be merely a matter of personal taste or preference.

[3] Hudson, op. cit., p. 235.

of his interpretation of Hume's version of the naturalistic fallacy. This rule is:

> No imperative conclusion can be validly drawn from a set of premisses which does not contain at least one imperative.[1]

In this respect, inferences from an indicative statement of fact which does not have any prescriptive meaning or which does not contain the neustic peculiar to imperatives to an imperative conclusion are invalid logically. Hare claims:

> In this logical rule, again, is to be found the basis of Hume's celebrated observation on the impossibility of deducing an "ought"-proposition from a series of "is"-propositions --an observation which, as he rightly says, "would subvert all the vulgar systems of morality," and not only those which had already appeared in his day.[2]

The justification for this rule is found in the fact that, again by definition, no indicative statement can answer the question "What shall I do?" Imperatives perform this function and Hare offers three reasons "for holding that by no form of inference, however loose, can we get an answer to the question 'What shall I do?' out of a set of premisses which do not contain, at any rate implicitly, an imperative."[3]

The first position against which Hare argues is that which would represent as a valid inference the following:

---

[1] Hare, Language of Morals, p. 28.

[2] Ibid., p. 29.

[3] Ibid., p. 46.

S is false.
Therefore, do not say S.

According to this view, we do not need an imperative premise but only a "special rule of inference" by which a definition of "false" is given. The inference is represented therefore as a matter of knowing the meaning of words alone. Hare claims, rightly, that this definition of "false" which could be offered would simply be an imperative in disguise and his rule would still be valid.[1] Secondly, Hare rejects the notion that principles which serve as the major premise in Hare's practical inference are really "loose" rules of inference by which the move from a statement of fact to an imperative can be considered "generally" valid. This view would not claim the strict entailment of imperatives from indicative premises but would allow exceptions to be made so that one might contradict oneself to say "This is a false statement, but say it anyway." Hare's argument with this view is that it does not take into account the "dynamic relationship between the exceptions and the principle," which is effected by the decision of the moral agent to treat certain classes of cases as belonging to another principle other than the one in question.[2] Finally, underlying these two objections to any attempt to derive imperatives from indicative premises alone is Hare's contention that decision is of the essence of morality

---

[1] Ibid., p. 46-9.

[2] Ibid., p. 52.

and it is decision alone which can make use of an imperative inference to guide action.

> When someone says, either, "This is false, so I won't say it," or "This is false, but I'll say it all the same, and make an exception to my principle," he is doing a lot more than inferring. A process of inference alone would not tell him which of these two things he was to say in any single case falling under the principle. He has to decide which of them to say. Inferring consists in saying that if he tells a falsehood he will be breaking the principle, whereas if he tells the truth he will be observing it. This is a perfectly good deductive inference, and nothing further need be said about it. The rest of what he does is not inference at all, but something quite different, namely, deciding whether to alter the principle or not.[1]

Inferences containing indicative premises alone cannot account for the factor of decision for which the conclusion to the inference represents a choice made regarding a future action. Unless a principle for judging the relevance of the indicative premise to the conclusion is present, then the inference cannot be drawn at all and no decision is made.

Nicholas Rescher has outlined in his monograph on The Logic of Commands the logic of this entailment of commands as it relates to the practice of computer programming, and his analysis confirms the rules which Hare has described. Rescher bases his notion of inference upon "command termination"; a command conclusion may be

---

[1] Ibid., p. 55. Cf. Rescher's argument that assertoric statements cannot provide any of the essential facets of commands and therefore commands cannot be entailed by them alone. Op. cit., Chapter 2.

validly derived from another command premise when the termination of the covering command necessarily means the termination of the covered commands. Command coverage (i.e. whether a covering command actually entails its covered commands) is based upon three requirements:

1) that those addressed in the first command include all of those addressed in the second,
2) that the first command calls for realizing everything that the second command calls for, and
3) that every time at and condition under which the second command becomes operative is also the time and condition for the operation of the first command.

Giving an example from a computer program, Rescher also argues for the notion of a mixed premise inference. Command A may be given to be carried out whenever suitable conditions B are present; the first premise is therefore "Do A whenever B." In the course of its operations the computer keeps asking, "Is B present?", letting a time unit elapse between each act of questioning, until a positive answer is given and the presence of B is affirmed. The second premise then becomes "B is present," and the command conclusion "Do A now" is derived. Rescher states the validity of heterogeneous command inferences thus:

> The inference whose conclusion is the command C and whose premisses include the commands C_1, C_2 ... C_n is valid in the context of (or read: contextually valid given) the assertoric premisses S_1, S_2, ... S_m if the command conclusion C can be decomposed--either absolutely or in the context of S_1, S_2, ... S_m --into the set of

> commands $C_1\#$, $C_2\#$, ... $C_k\#$ in such a way that each $C_i\#$ can be covered by some of the C_j either by simple coverage or by contextual coverage given the assertoric statements S_1, S_2, ... S_m. [1]

The necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the validity of these inferences is thus that the command conclusion be terminated whenever all command premises are terminated and all assertoric premises are true.[2]

What the prescriptivist account has done is to make moral reasoning a matter of deducing imperatives which will guide one's actions from either universal imperatives or principles, in conjunction with a set of facts, a deduction which is possible on the basis of the descriptive meaning of moral language. There is a two-way process occurring here: one is a matter of deciding which principles to adopt as one's own and the other is a matter of deducing particular imperatives from such principles in specific situations. The first process Hare describes as the exploratory character of moral reasoning, similar to the process in science of reasoning towards a hypothesis which one is prepared to accept as true. "What we are doing in moral reasoning is to look for moral judgements and moral principles which, when we have considered their logical consequences and the facts of the case, we can still accept."[3] Acceptance of such

---

[1] Rescher, op. cit., p. 80.

[2] Ibid., p. 88-9.

[3] Hare, Freedom and Reason, p. 88. Cf. similar statements on p. 92, 193.

principles means, logically, that one is prepared to act consistently upon them, that is, to use them for making practical decisions, and to recognise their applicability to new situations which are covered by the descriptive content of the principles.

> When we are trying, in a concrete case, to decide what we ought to do, what we are looking for (as I have already said) is an action to which we can commit ourselves (prescriptivity) but which we are at the same time prepared to accept as exemplifying a principle of action to be prescribed for others in like circumstances (universalizability). If, when we consider some proposed action, we find that, when universalized, it yields prescriptions which we cannot accept, we reject this action as a solution to our moral problem--if we cannot universalize the prescription, it cannot become an "ought."[1]

The search for such principles is a process in which the moral agent exercises his freedom to choose the moral principles that will best serve as a guide to his future action and in which he rationally considers the reasons for and consequences of principles so that his decision to accept one over another is not purely arbitrary. To do this is to play by the "rules of the game," that is, to abide by the logic of prescriptive language.

Once a principle of action is adopted it is then axiomatic that specific singular imperatives can be deduced from it according to the rules of imperative inference. A moral agent acts in accordance with his principles in a kind of "dynamic interaction" of principles and decision. Hare claims:

---

[1] Ibid., p. 90.

> All decisions except those, if any, that are completely arbitrary are to some extent decisions of principle . . . . Suppose that we have a principle to act in a certain way in certain circumstances. Suppose then that we find ourselves in circumstances which fall under the principle, but which have certain other peculiar features, not met before, which make us ask "Is the principle really intended to cover cases like this, or is it incompletely specified--is there here a case belonging to a class which should be treated as exceptional?" Our answer to this question will be a decision, but a decision of principle, as is shown by the use of the value-word "should."[1]

Each dilemma which the moral person faces then is characterised by the need to decide which of one's principles is appropriate to the situation at hand and, in deciding, to act in the fulfillment of that principle. In such a decision the interplay of the descriptive and evaluative meaning of moral language is also noticeable. The descriptive content of the principle and the statement of fact which serves as the minor premise give us the necessary reasons for the evaluative conclusion to be drawn, but it is the decision to accept the conclusion and act upon it that alone fully justifies the conclusion and constitutes the sufficient condition for the validity of the inference. It is the task of the logician of ethics, which Hare considers himself to be, to describe precisely the way in which facts or statements of fact are relevant to matters of morality, both in making value-judgements and in giving imperatives, while avoiding any identification of fact and value and any deduction of evaluative

---

[1]Hare, Language of Morals, p. 65.

conclusions from purely descriptive premises. We shall see whether Hare's prescriptivist account is the most adequate for understanding this complex relationship of indicative and imperative.

CHAPTER III

THE DESCRIPTIVIST ACCOUNT OF ETHICAL DECISION

Hare claims near the end of Freedom and Reason that his account of the logic of moral language is morally neutral and that from its description, which is the task of ethics, no substantive moral prescriptions can be derived.

> On my view, there is absolutely no content for a moral prescription that is ruled out by logic or by the definition of terms. Another feature of my position, allied to this one, is that there is no statement of fact that a moral prescription, taken singly, can be inconsistent with.[1]

It is just this aspect of Hare's prescriptivism which has prompted a serious challenge to his work and to his interpretation of Hume's version of the naturalistic fallacy. This challenge can be labelled the descriptivist account of morality.[2] Hudson defines a descriptivist as follows:

---

[1] Hare, Freedom and Reason, p. 195.

[2] Hare, "Descriptivism," Proceedings of the British Academy (1963), reprinted in Hudson, The Is/Ought Question. Hare takes this term from J. L. Austin who suggested "the descriptive fallacy" was "supposing that some utterance is descriptive when it is not . . . 'descriptivism,' then, can perhaps be used as a generic name for philosophical theories which fall into this fallacy." (p. 240) The reference from Austin is to be found in Philosophical Papers (Oxford, 1961), p. 71.

> . . . someone who holds at least these two opinions: (i) that it is not always logically possible to separate the descriptive and the evaluative meanings of a moral judgment; and (ii) that the criteria applied in moral judgment are not in the last analysis merely a matter of free choice.[1]

It is important for us to examine this new account of moral reasoning since it offers not only the chance for some critical evaluation of prescriptivism but also some suggestions about the relationship of indicative and imperative in the logic of moral decision.

A radical criticism of Hare's prescriptivism has come from Philippa Foot who in her writings has taken up the two challenges mentioned above: that descriptive and evaluative meanings cannot be so strictly separated as Hare had hoped and that one is not totally free with regard to the choice of criteria by which one commends things. In raising both these issues, Foot hopes to close the gap between fact and value and to point out a different kind of relationship between them. Moral philosophers since Moore have, in Foot's opinion, presupposed that there are two distinct categories of fact and value and correspondingly that there are two distinct sorts of ways one can talk about things, evaluatively and descriptively. The accounts of Hare and Stevenson both "are governed by the thought that there is no logical connection between statements of fact and statements of value, so that each man makes his own decision as to the

---

[1] Hudson, op. cit., p. 295.

facts about an action which are relevant to its evaluation."[1] This contrast between fact and value is brought out by these philosophers, Foot claims, in their considerations of what is to count as evidence for factual and evaluative conclusions. With regard to the former, it is assumed that:

> The truth or falsity of statements of fact is shown by means of evidence; and what counts as evidence is laid down in the meaning of the expressions occurring in the statement of fact . . . It follows that no two people can make the same statement and count completely different things as evidence; in the end one at least of them could be convicted of linguistic ignorance.[2]

When matters of fact are concerned there is, on this view, little freedom of choice with regard to what will count as evidence since this is determined already by the conventions of linguistic usage. Thus, in Foot's example, "the meaning of 'round' and 'flat' made Magellan's voyages evidence for the roundness rather than the flatness of the Earth; someone who went on questioning whether the evidence was evidence could eventually be shown to have made some linguistic mistake."[3] A dispute about an empirical matter can therefore be resolved firstly by seeking to verify the truth or falsity of the claim and secondly, if this does not end the disagreement, by referring to the accepted criteria for the use of words. To use words descriptively

---

[1]Foot, "Moral Arguments," Mind, Vol. 67 (1958), reprinted in Thomson and Dworkin, Ethics (Harper and Row, New York, 1968), p. 10.

[2]Foot, "Moral Beliefs," Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Vol. LIX (1958), reprinted in Hudson, op. cit., p. 196.

[3]Ibid.

then, according to Foot, is to use them according to accepted linguistic rules and to be able to give evidence when required to do so, the criteria for which are laid down by the meaning of the words used.

It is her claim that Hare and Stevenson in particular have not taken this to be true of the evaluative use of words. She takes them to be saying:

> An evaluation is not connected logically with the factual statements on which it is based. One man may say that a thing is good because of some fact about it, and another may refuse to take that fact as any evidence at all, for nothing is laid down in the meaning of "good" which connects it with one piece of "evidence" rather than another.[1]

Evaluative words in general and moral words in particular have a kind of autonomy from the facts, an autonomy which is represented as a function of either the "pro-attitude" of the user or the "action-guiding" or practical character of evaluative words. These "non-naturalists" are concerned to define that unique quality or character of evaluative language by which it stands apart from descriptive language and by which, according to Foot, its logical relations with descriptive language are severed. Whereas disputes regarding matters of fact are capable of resolution, disputes over moral or evaluative matters ultimately break down and cannot be resolved. There comes a point in a moral argument when no further appeals to evidence or reasons can be made and when the only justification left for holding the claim in dispute is either that one has a

---

[1] Ibid.

"pro-attitude" towards the thing in question or that one has freely chosen the principles by which to guide choices and actions consistently. "In the end everyone is forced back to some moral principle which he simply asserts--and which someone else may simply deny. It can therefore be no reproach to anyone that he gives no reasons for a statement of moral principle, since any moral argument must contain some undefended premise of this kind."[1] Evidence for evaluative conclusions is, on Hare's and Stevenson's accounts, simply a matter of choice and there is complete freedom here in that there are no logical limits to what can count as evidence.

Foot argues that such a view of descriptive and evaluative meaning not only allows for and justifies moral eccentricity but also seems to contradict some fairly common observations about our use of words. She therefore criticises the non-naturalist position for two mistaken assumptions:

> Assumption (1) is that some individual may, without logical error, base his beliefs about matters of value entirely on premises which no one else would recognise as giving any evidence at all. Assumption (2) is that, given the kind of statement which other people regard as evidence for an evaluative conclusion, he may refuse to draw the conclusion because <u>this</u> does not count as evidence for <u>him</u>.[2]

In his account of contemporary moral philosophy, G. J. Warnock has drawn attention to these assumptions as well.

---

[1] Foot, "Moral Arguments," p. 10.

[2] Foot, "Moral Beliefs," p. 197.

The "anti-naturalists" maintain "not merely that description and evaluation are different, but that they are in an important sense independent."[1] Warnock's interpretation of this independence has also to do with the freedom which the anti-naturalists claim for choosing the standards or criteria for the use of evaluative words. He describes their position as follows:

> . . . no one, it is suggested, is ever logically obliged to accept any given feature as a standard or criterion, or any general proposition as a rule or principle of judgment . . . There can be description, but no evaluation, without the adoption or recognition of standards; but if so, since one cannot be logically obliged to adopt any particular facts or features, or even any at all, as standards for favourable or unfavourable judgment, the specification of facts or features in a description cannot logically lead to any particular evaluation, or even any at all.[2]

These assumptions of non-naturalism are criticised by Foot and Warnock on the basis of three considerations and it is important that we examine each of these in turn. They are: (1) that descriptive and evaluative meanings are in some instances logically tied to one another, (2) that there is a limit to the kinds of things which are relevant to evaluative judgements, and (3) that the criteria for the use of good and some other evaluative words are determined by factors other than those established by choice or preference.

---

[1]G. J. Warnock, Contemporary Moral Philosophy (Macmillan and Co., Ltd., London, 1967), p. 64.

[2]Ibid., p. 65.

In her argument against such a sharp distinction between the evaluative and the descriptive meaning of words, Foot claims to be able to show through some examples of non-moral evaluation the disappearance of any clear boundaries between them. Non-naturalists, she claims, have said that "any statement of value always seems to go beyond any statement of fact" and that it is "one thing to say that a thing is so, and another to have a particular attitude towards its being so; one thing to see that certain effects will follow from a given action, and another to care . . . ."[1] The conclusion of this view is that "with an evaluation there was a committal in a new dimension" and this commitment is evidenced, in the writings of Hare for example, in that the speaker uses this evaluation to guide his own actions and decisions. To say "X is a good action" is, as we have seen, to commit oneself whenever possible to giving oneself an imperative, "Let me do X," and to so acting. Foot presents two arguments against such a view. The first is that in some cases it does not make sense to describe an action fully and then to decide whether or not to commend that action. As an example, she offers the descriptive-evaluative sentence "X is a courageous man." Non-naturalists will argue, Foot claims,

> that after the facts have been accepted--say that X is the kind of man who will climb a dangerous mountain, beard an irascible employer for a rise

---

[1]Foot, "Moral Beliefs," p. 206.

> in pay, and in general face the fearful for the sake of something he thinks worth while--there remains the question of "commendation" or "evaluation." If the word "courage" is used they will ask whether or not the man who speaks of another as having courage is supposed to have commended him.[1]

Now it is just such a question, the answer to which is assumed to be independent of the description already offered, which Foot claims to be inappropriate and mistaken.

> What sense can be made, however, of the question "does he commend?" What is this extra element which is supposed to be present or absent after the facts have been settled? It is not a matter of liking the man who has courage, or of thinking him altogether good, but of "commending him for his courage." How are we supposed to do that?[2]

Foot would point out that a great number of words in our language are words like "courageous" in which the descriptive and evaluative meanings are too closely intertwined to be clearly distinguished. As Warnock argues,

> Since . . . there are in ordinary discourse comparatively few regimented distinctions between one speech-activity and another, one might expect to find description and evaluation so inextricably intermingled as to constitute, as it were, a seamless garment; and there cannot be logically independent parts of a tract of discourse which has, in the required sense, no distinguishable parts.[3]

The commendation involved in the statement "X is a courageous man" is written right into the description of X and of his activities so that to offer this description is all that one needs do to commend X. To go further than

---

[1] Ibid., p. 208.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Warnock, op. cit., p. 64.

this, that is, to say that one cannot commend without accepting an imperative for one's own action based on the same principle, is unnecessary. "I can speak of someone else as having the virtue of courage, and of course recognise it as a virtue in the proper sense, while knowing that I am a complete coward, and making no resolution to reform."[1] Indeed, evaluation does have an "action-guiding force" but this has been misunderstood by the non-naturalists to be a function of the unique element of evaluative language which is superadded to the descriptive element.

Foot's argument goes even further than this, however, and this is her second point against the logical separation of descriptive and evaluative meaning. Non-naturalists claim that the conclusion of a syllogism can only have evaluative meaning when the premises taken together have evaluative meaning as well and that "unless this is so it will always be possible to assert the premises and yet deny the conclusion . . . ."[2] To show that this claim is false Foot analyses the nature of the

---

[1]Foot, "Moral Beliefs," p. 209. Hudson argues that here Foot's point is trivial if she means to imply that we suffer "weakness of will" and so may not fulfill the imperative given to ourselves--indeed Hare himself allows for this possibility--or else her point is mistaken since Hudson takes it to be axiomatic that "If I am (a) sincere and (b) able, it is to be expected that, having commended Smith for being courageous, I shall be, or at least try to be courageous myself." Op. cit., p. 296-7.

[2]Foot, "Moral Arguments," p. 13.

statement "That behaviour is rude." "Rude," she says, is an evaluative word which "expresses, fairly mild, condemnation" and it is used in cases "where certain descriptions apply."[1] What she wishes to know is that not just any evidence will count as evidence for rude behaviour, a claim which she accuses the non-naturalists of making, but rather that in making evaluative statements we must abide by the criteria of rudeness established by social convention in defining this word.

> Given that this reference to offence is to be included in any account of the concept of rudeness, we may ask what the relation is between the assertion that these conditions of offence are fulfilled--let us call it O--and the statement that a piece of behaviour is rude--let us call it R. Can someone who accepts the proposition O (that this kind of offence is caused) deny the proposition R (that the behaviour is rude)? I should have thought that this was just what he could not do, for if he says that it is not rude, we shall stare, and ask him what sort of behaviour would be rude; and what is he to say?[2]

Not only do the conditions for offence give evidence for the conclusion that some behaviour is rude, but this conclusion is entailed by the descriptive premises which state the offence.

> I conclude that whether a man is speaking of behaviour as rude or not rude, he must use the same criteria as anyone else, and that since the criteria are satisfied if O is true, it is impossible for him to assert O while denying R. It follows that if it is a sufficient condition of P's entailing Q that the assertion of P is inconsistent with the denial of Q, we have here an example of a non-evaluative premise from which an evaluative conclusion can be deduced.[3]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 14.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 15-16.

Foot concludes therefore that the use of the word "rude" and other evaluative words like it is dependent, not upon one's attitude towards the behaviour in question nor upon one's adopting a principle for one's own future behaviour, but rather upon the presence or absence of certain conditions, conditions which are explained in the description of the behaviour and which, in the end, are a purely factual matter. If this view can be shown to be true of many evaluative words, then the gap between evaluative and descriptive meaning supposed by non-naturalists can be closed.

The analysis which Foot has offered of descriptive and evaluative indicative statements has the consequence not only of closing this gap between them but also of limiting the range of considerations which are relevant to evaluative and moral statements. The mistaken notion that such a range is unlimited comes as a result of two erroneous presuppositions made by non-naturalists: (1) that evaluation bears an external relation to its objects and (2) that moral judgements in particular are distinguishable by their form only, not by their content. With regard to the first point, Foot contends that such a hypothesis is untenable; ". . . there is no describing the evaluative meaning of 'good', evaluation, commending, or anything of the sort, without fixing the object to which they are supposed to be attached."[1] To understand

---

[1]Foot, "Moral Beliefs," p. 198.

the nature of evaluation and to understand its action-guiding character requires a consideration of the object to which an evaluation refers. Such a consideration will be descriptive of the object in question but will reveal that an "internal relation" exists between the object and the evaluation of it. Foot offers the examples of rudeness (which we have already discussed), pride, and danger to argue that the evaluation implicit in these words is a function of the object itself and therefore is "logically vulnerable" to the facts.[1] In considering pride for example Foot attempts to show that "there are limits to the things a man can be proud of, about which indeed he can feel pride."[2] A rough survey of these things will show us that there are two factors especially which are common to them. "The characteristic object of pride is something seen (a) as in some way a man's own, and (b) as some sort of achievement or advantage; without this object pride cannot be described."[3] The presence of such a personal achievement is justifiable reason for adopting the attitude of pride and likewise, the attitude is dependent upon or restricted to the presence of its peculiar object. In the same way, to claim that something is dangerous is dependent upon the presence of an object which can be described as injurious and since, Foot argues, "the range of things which can be called injuries is quite

---

[1] Ibid., p. 201.

[2] Ibid., p. 198.

[3] Ibid., p. 199.

narrowly restricted, the word 'dangerous' is restricted in so far as it is connected with injury."[1] These examples are intended to illustrate the way in which "mental attitudes" are logically related to their objects and it is assumed that the attitude of commendation which is of special importance in making moral evaluations is tied to its objects in the same way.

The use of moral value words, and in particular the use of "good," is logically tied to those objects or actions which can be shown to have "a point" and by showing the rather limited range of those things which can be considered to have a moral "point" both Foot and Warnock hope to argue that morality itself is limited to those objects. Moral judgements according to this view are thus to be distinguished by their content. For the non-naturalists the point of using the word "good" or of talking about moral virtues is either to express one's pro-attitude (as in the case of emotivism) or to commend something (as in the case of prescriptivism); for the descriptivists the point of using moral language is to indicate the way in which some object or action leads to human good or avoids harm. "It is surely clear that moral virtues must be connected with human good and harm," Foot argues and she claims to show that such reasons as "harm, advantage, benefit, importance, etc." can furnish the necessary and sufficient conditions for any moral judgement. Warnock argues that the point of morality has to

---

[1] Ibid., p. 203.

do with "the welfare of human beings" and that "the relevance of considerations as to the welfare of human beings cannot, in the context of moral debate, be denied."[1] Not only is it the case that moral judgements have this kind of point but conversely one who asserts such a judgement must, if he intends his judgements to be taken seriously or to be understood, be able to describe the point.

> I do not know what could be meant by saying that it was someone's duty to do something unless there was an attempt to show why it mattered if this sort of thing was not done. How can questions such as "what does it matter?", "what harm does it do?", "what advantage is there in . . .?", "why is it important?", be set aside here?[2]

While Foot argues that moral language simply cannot be taken seriously if the importance of the object or action is not indicated, Warnock claims that this language is not understood unless we can understand how it is related to a person's wants.[3]

---

[1]Warnock, op. cit., p. 67. Cf. G. E. M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," Philosophy, Vol. 33 (1958), reprinted in Thomson and Dworkin, op. cit. She suggests that the point or justification of morality is in "human flourishing" so that, if anything "needs what makes it flourish, so a man needs, or ought to perform, only virtuous actions . . . " (p. 209).

[2]Foot, "Moral Arguments," p. 17.

[3]Warnock, op. cit., p. 66-7. The precise relation between needs and wants or desires is not clearly defined by the descriptivists, as Hare has argued in his defense of prescriptivism. He attempts to show that logic alone cannot place limits upon what one desires and, if the necessary condition for the satisfaction of a desire is something which is needed, then there are no logical limits on this either (op. cit., p. 250-7). Warnock claims, however, that he merely wants to limit the

The case for the limitation of those things which are relevant to moral evaluation is carried further by Foot and Warnock in their discussion of the criteria for the use of the word "good." They both argue that choosing cannot be either a necessary or a sufficient condition for the application of the word "good" to some object or action and that, ultimately, evaluation does not rest upon choice at all. In describing the non-naturalist position of Hare, Warnock claims that

> . . . he is saying, not only that it is for us to decide what our moral opinions are, but also that it is for us to decide what to take as grounds for or against any moral opinion. We are not only, as it were, free to decide on the evidence, but also free to decide what evidence is. I do not, it seems, decide that flogging is wrong because I <u>am</u> against cruelty; rather, I decide that flogging is wrong because I <u>decide to be</u> against cruelty. And what, if I did make that decision, would be my ground for making it? That I am opposed to the deliberate infliction of pain? No--rather that I <u>decide to be</u> opposed to it. And so on.[1]

To take this position is to hold that good and other value words are only contingently related to their objects and to hold that whatever one chooses to be a reason for the evaluation of some object or action is adequate justification (or legitimasation, to use Foot's term) for that evaluation. Foot and Warnock contend, however, that "If a man who calls an A a good A has reason, other things being

---

relevant considerations for something said to be good and in this sense agrees with the naturalists' position. "If to be a 'naturalist' is to maintain that certain kinds of facts or features are necessarily relevant criteria of moral evaluation, then I would surmise that 'naturalism' is true" (p. 68).

[1] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 47.

equal, to prefer it to other A's, this is because of the kind of thing that an A is, and its connection with his wants and needs."[1] That "the kind of thing that an A is" can give a sufficient and a necessary reason for choosing A or for evaluating it in a particular way can be shown by several examples, argues Foot. One class of objects for which this is so is that group characterised by having a function. Objects such as knives, pens, and so forth can be described in functional terms and in this description the criteria for the goodness of these objects is determined. Thus,

> the primary criterion of goodness in a knife is its ability to cut well. If a man goes into a shop and asks for a knife, saying that he wants a good knife, he can be understood as wanting one that cuts well, and since "knife" is a functional word in the strong sense "good knives cut well" must be held to be some kind of analytic proposition.[2]

Indeed the same holds true of non-functional words such as "father," "farmer," "rider," "liar," and so forth in which again the criteria for the goodness of these roles is determined by and limited to the definition of these roles in a particular community.

> What is good farming will naturally vary somewhat from place to place . . . But within such limits the standards by which farming is judged depend on the meaning of the word, since what counts in farming is only something which has a particular point.[3]

---

[1] Foot, "Goodness and Choice," The Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume XXXV (1961), reprinted in Hudson, op. cit., p. 227.

[2] Ibid., p. 216. [3] Ibid., p. 218.

The criteria for the goodness of things and the reasons which would count as evidence for one's evaluation are thus necessarily entailed by the description either of the function of some thing or of its characteristics. To call something "good" is thus the result not of one's having chosen it but of one's recognition of the descriptive characteristics of it; in this way value is determined by facts. The other factor which is determinative of one's evaluation of something is the connection between that object or action and "human needs or wants." Warnock claims that to evaluate is to indicate one's preference for something and this preference is the result of a need or want. He argues, as we have seen, that there is a limit to the things a human being can understandably be said to want or need and therefore this also is not the result of choice. Thus, "we do not choose to want this or that, to prefer one thing to another; when we have choices to make, we do not in turn choose what are to be reasons for choosing. To take that line, as we suggested earlier that prescriptivism does, is to imply that in the end there <u>are</u> no reasons at all."[1] Thus with regard to both reasons which can be given for calling something good, namely the descriptive characteristics of the thing as well as its connection with needing or wanting, the descriptivists can claim "that criteria for

---

[1]Warnock, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 67.

the goodness of each and every kind of thing . . . are always determined, and not a matter for decision."[1]

It is important at this point that we raise two criticisms which have been made against the descriptivists so that the nature of the descriptive and evaluative meaning of indicative statements becomes more clear. In replying to the descriptivists' challenge, Hare suggests that the basic fallacy of this account is to suppose "that some utterance is descriptive when it is not" and therefore to equivocate on what is meant by description and evaluation.[2] In his essay on descriptivism, Hare maintains that there are two ways in which description and evaluation may be interdependent and that these two ways are conflated in the descriptivists' account. The first way in which they may be related is that the descriptive characteristics of an object or action furnish the reasons for an evaluative judgement and the person who makes such a judgement must be able to know and give those reasons. If a person claims "That behaviour is rude," he must support this evaluation with reasons which will be in the form of indicative sentences describing the factual characteristics of the behaviour. Hare offers the following as an example of the relation between reasons and choices.

---

[1]Foot, "Goodness and Choice," p. 216.

[2]Hare, op. cit., p. 240. See above, p. 49-50.

> If I am choosing between an ordinary mushroom and a poisonous toadstool to put in the dish that I am making for myself, I naturally choose, and prefer, and think it best to choose and that I ought to choose, the mushroom and not the toadstool; and I think this because the latter is poisonous (i.e. such as to cause death if eaten). That the toadstool is poisonous is my reason for rejecting it.[1]

The descriptive characteristics of the object or action are indeed highly relevant therefore to the choices which one makes but this does not in any way prove that choices can be reduced to reasons nor that choices are superfluous once the reasons are explained. To maintain that this is so would be to maintain that describing and evaluating are in effect the same thing. Indeed this seems to be what Foot in particular is arguing in her discussion of the evaluative words like "courageous" or "rude" and it is here that, Hare claims, she conflates the second relation between evaluation and description with the first. The second way in which these two may be related is that an evaluation may become logically tied to a particular description within certain words. Thus "if I say that a man has acted courageously, it will be odd for me to add that he did not do the right thing."[2] However, whereas Hare would agree with the first way in which descriptions and evaluations are related, he is not willing to accept the interpretation

---

[1] Ibid., p. 257.

[2] Hudson, Modern Moral Philosophy, p. 297.

of this second way which is offered by the descriptivists. Foot, in particular, claims that the descriptive characteristics of a certain type of offensive behaviour entail the evaluative conclusion that this behaviour is rude and thus that one cannot refuse to accept the conclusion once the description has been proved.[1] What she seems to be arguing, Hare claims, is that one cannot say that the offensive behaviour is the reason for one's choosing to call it rude unless one is prepared to argue that the offensive behaviour entails this particular evaluation. What is wrong with such an argument is that:

> this is to confuse logical entailment . . . with the relation between choice and reasons for choice . . . The relation between choice and reasons for choice is not a logical relation. There is no logical compulsion on me, or even any weaker logical constraint, to refrain from eating what I know will kill me. I refrain from eating it because I know it will kill me; but if I did the opposite, and ate it because I knew it would kill me, I should not be offending against any logical rule regulating the uses of words . . . .[2]

Hare argues that this confusion places non-naturalists in a false dilemma and that only when the two issues are separated can any progress in understanding be made.

---

[1]Foot, "Moral Arguments," p. 14-16.

[2]Hare, op. cit., p. 257-8. Warnock concedes that this point is valid. "If the anti-naturalist then maintains that there are no criteria of evaluation which anyone is logically obliged to accept, then I believe that 'anti-naturalism' is also true." In this sense he claims that the naturalist and anti-naturalist positions are not incompatible with each other. Op. cit., p. 68-9.

> Now if anybody thinks that one can never say "q because p" unless there is a logical connection between "p" and "q," he is likely to attempt to place opponents of descriptivism in the following dilemma. Either we have to admit that there is a logical connection between statements of fact, taken by themselves, and evaluative conclusions . . . ; or else we must hold that evaluative judgements are never made because of anything--i.e. that they are quite irrational.[1]

To be placed in such a dilemma only can be the result of accepting this confusion of the boundaries between evaluative and descriptive meaning.

The second argument to be made against descriptivism is one which brings out at once both the best and the worst in this account of moral reasoning. It is to the credit of the descriptivists that they have called attention to the great number of words in our language which are used with both evaluative and descriptive meanings and that they have urged a much more careful examination into the nature of the relation between these meanings. Foot has attempted to do this, however, by claiming that what she calls "non-evaluative" or "descriptive" premises can entail evaluative conclusions,

---

[1] Ibid., p. 258. This same kind of dilemma is described by R. W. Beardsmore, Moral Reasoning (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1969). He argues against Foot's notion that an evaluative and particularly a moral judgement cannot be considered important unless it can be shown to be logically (i.e. internally) related to some "point." This is to confuse the reasons for one's evaluation, which implicitly show the importance--as opposed to the triviality--of the evaluation with the meaning of that evaluation, which Foot claims to be important only if its logical connection with human good or harm can be shown. This confusion presents the opposition again with a false dilemma of either admitting that reasons for a moral judgement are trivial or accepting that moral reasons are logically entailed by considerations of human good or harm.

that the meaning of the one is bound up with the meaning of the other. However, as Phillips and Mounce have argued, such an inference can only make sense or be considered valid given a certain context of social practices and behaviour and it is precisely this background which will reveal the hidden evaluative premise necessary for the deductive inference. With the statement "That behaviour is rude" for example, it is not simply a matter of the facts whether such a statement is justified or not.

> A person who wishes to say that the offence is a "pure fact" from which a moral conclusion can be deduced is simply confused. What are the "pure facts" relating to the pushing and the injury it is supposed to cause? A physiological account of the pushing (which might be regarded as pure enough) would not enable one to say what was going on, any more than a physiological account of the injury would tell us anything about what moral action (if any) is called for as a result.[1]

What Foot has failed to recognize is that her account of such an inference depends upon the evaluative meaning of the word "offence" which she claims to be part of her "non-evaluative" premises and such evaluative meaning is dependent upon the rules for behaviour which are agreed upon by any particular community of people.[2] Thus, "the

---

[1] D. Z. Phillips and H. O. Mounce, Moral Practices (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1969), p. 50.

[2] The example used by Phillips and Mounce to argue this point is from Malcolm's memoirs of Wittgenstein. Malcolm describes an incident in which G. E. Moore and Wittgenstein agreed as to the facts of Wittgenstein's behaviour but disagreed as to its evaluation, Moore thinking his behaviour rude and Wittgenstein thinking it appropriate and not at all rude. See Norman Malcolm, Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir (Oxford, 1968), p. 33, and Phillips and Mounce, op. cit., p. 50-1.

notion of 'offence' is parasitic on the notion of a standard or norm, although these need not be formulated"; the description of the word "offence" has, therefore, "moral import."[1] This particular attack on Hume's version of the naturalistic fallacy fails therefore because the premises from which, it is claimed, an evaluative conclusion can be deduced are not purely descriptive ones; this version of the fallacy has not therefore been refuted in Foot's account.

The importance of this attempt is, however, that Hume's account of the naturalistic fallacy is shown to be in need of some further consideration and several possible ways of deducing evaluative conclusions from non-evaluative premises have been suggested. In particular new attempts have been made to close the gap between sentences containing "is" and those containing "ought" and to show that imperatives, both singular and more general ones, can be deduced from indicatives. An alternative is thereby offered to Hare's notion of moral reasoning in which the practical syllogism is the primary form of the logic of moral decision. Two articles published in 1958 by G. E. M. Anscombe give us one of the earliest clues as to the character of this revision of Hume and indicate that an important factor in a new account of moral reasoning will involve a reconsideration of the nature of "facts" and thus also of indicative sentences

---

[1] Ibid.

which state facts.[1] To show the inadequacy both of Hume's understanding of fact and of his notion of the truth relations which hold between sentences, Anscombe appeals to the notion of institutional facts and argues for the validity of the transition from "is" to "owes."

> Following Hume I might say to my grocer: "Truth consists in agreement either to relations of ideas, as that twenty shillings make a pound, or to matters of fact, as that you have delivered me a quarter of potatoes; from this you can see that the term does not apply to such a proposition as that I owe you so much for the potatoes. You really must not jump from an 'is'--as, that it really is the case that I asked for the potatoes and that you delivered them and sent me a bill--to an 'owes.'"[2]

Given the context of our institutions regarding the buying of goods from a grocer, Anscombe argues that her owing the grocer for the potatoes "consists in" the facts that she ordered them and he delivered them. Indeed, the conclusion "I owe the grocer for these potatoes" is the description of a certain relation between the grocer and the shopper which holds true given the institution of buying and selling and these particular circumstances.

The first important suggestion which is made by Anscombe's discussion is that an imperative such as "I ought to pay the grocer for the potatoes he delivered"

---

[1] Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," and "On Brute Facts," Analysis, Vol. 18 (1958), both reprinted in Thomson and Dworkin, op. cit., p. 186-210 and 71-5 respectively. References to these articles will be taken from Thomson and Dworkin.

[2] Anscombe, "On Brute Facts," p. 71. Cf. "Modern Moral Philosophy," p. 189.

does not add some non-factual element to the statement of the facts which are relevant to the transaction.[1] In this sense,

> . . . there is no need to appeal to anything beyond the facts when considering what is morally important. No appeals to a mysterious realm of evaluative meaning are necessary. If a customer orders potatoes, and the grocer delivers them to him, the grocer is justified in saying that the customer owes him for the potatoes. There is little point in the philosophers' protest that we cannot derive an "ought"--that he owes the grocer for the potatoes--from an "is"--that he ordered the potatoes and that the grocer delivered them--since the example illustrates the artificiality of the thesis.[2]

The meaning of the imperative is bound up not only with the institution of buying and selling which furnishes its context or background but also with the truth of certain facts which are relevant to it. From the description of the transaction between the shopper and the grocer and given the institution of buying and selling the imperative conclusion is "in normal circumstances" valid.[3] Secondly, the issue of what constitutes a "brute fact" is raised by Anscombe who claims that the facts relevant to the imperative conclusion above are "brute relative to" this conclusion. Thus, the fact that the grocer carted the potatoes to the buyer's house and left them there is a brute fact relative to the indicative statement that

---

[1] Ibid., p. 72.

[2] Phillips and Mounce, op. cit., p. 119.

[3] Anscombe, "On Brute Facts," p. 74. Cf. "Modern Moral Philosophy," p. 189-90.

the grocer "supplied" the buyer with potatoes; however, this statement itself becomes a brute fact relative to the fact that the buyer owes the grocer for the potatoes.

> In relation to many descriptions of events or states of affairs which are asserted to hold, we can ask what the "brute facts" were: and this will mean the facts which held, and in virtue of which, in a proper context, such-and-such a description is true or false, and which are more "brute" than the alleged fact answering to that description.[1]

The challenge thus raised is to reconsider the evaluative and descriptive meaning of both indicative and imperative sentences and in this way to consider the possibility of deducing imperatives from indicatives.

The notion of the relative bruteness of facts has become the starting point for several attempts to show how "ought" can be derived from "is" and it is important that we examine several of these for the insight they can offer regarding the logic of moral decision. Max Black is one writer who has challenged the prescriptivists' interpretation of Hume's famous passage and of the autonomous character of moral judgements. In light of the tremendous influence of Hume's remarks, Black proposes "to assign to the principle that only factual statements can follow from exclusively factual statements the title 'Hume's Guillotine.'"[2] Interpretation of Hume's guillotine and

---

[1] Ibid., p. 73-4.

[2] Black, "The Gap Between 'Is' and 'Should,'" Philosophical Review, Vol. LXXIII (1964), reprinted in Hudson, The Is/Ought Question, p. 100.

in particular Hare's use of it as the foundation for the autonomy of "ought" rests, in Black's view, on the presupposition that "no term may occur in the conclusion of a valid argument unless it occurs, or can be made to occur by suitable definitions, somewhere in the premises."[1] Now as a rule governing the logic of syllogistic reasoning, this presupposition is quite correct; however, what is mistaken is that this rule governs all forms of valid argument and further that all moral reasoning is syllogistic. One example which Black offers of such non-syllogistic reasoning is the following:

> Vivisection causes gratuitous suffering to animals. Therefore, if nothing that causes gratuitous suffering ought to be done, vivisection ought not to be done.[2]

This form of argument is based on the rule that "If A then B" entails "If B ought not to be done, A ought not to be done," in which clearly the conclusion does not occur in the premises.[3] However, the type of moral reasoning which Black considers a real challenge to the notion of "an unbridgeable logical gap between 'ought' and 'is'" is that in which moral advice is derived from certain facts being true. The following is an example:

---

[1] Ibid., p. 100-1.

[2] Ibid., p. 101.

[3] Another example of this non-syllogistic reasoning is offered by A. N. Prior. From the rule of deduction "P; therefore either P or Q" the following transition from non-ethical premises to an ethical conclusion is valid: "Tea-drinking is common in England; therefore either tea-drinking is common in England or all New Zealanders ought to be shot." "The Autonomy of Ethics," Australasian Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 38 (1960), p. 201.

> Fischer wants to mate Botwinnik.
> The one and only way to mate Botwinnik is for Fischer to move the Queen.
> Therefore, Fischer should move the Queen.[1]

An observer of this particular chess game between Fischer and Botwinnik who knows the point and the rules of the game and who wishes to give Fischer some practical advice derives that advice, here in the form of a weak imperative, from the facts of the case stated in the two premises.

The relationship between the premises and the conclusion is not, however, one of strict entailment for the conclusion that Fischer should move the Queen does not follow by "logical necessity" from the given factual premises. Black claims:

> . . . I am reluctant to say that the practical "should"-conclusion is entailed by its factual premises: the important contrast with straightforward cases of entailment might indeed be marked by using some such label as "latent necessity" or "virtual necessity."[2]

Since "giving advice is performing a voluntary action" one may legitimately refrain from giving this particular advice or any advice at all on the basis of certain other facts which one knows to be true.[3] However, once a person

---

[1]Black, op. cit., p. 102.

[2]Ibid., p. 111.

[3]One might not give this particular advice to Fischer knowing that Botwinnik has a weak heart and would collapse from the shock of such a move or one might not give advice at all knowing that Fischer has not asked for nor does he need any help in choosing his next move. Ibid., p. 108. For a discussion of the significance of such alternatives, see Phillips, "The Possibilities of Moral Advice," Analysis, Vol. 25 (1964), reprinted in Hudson, op. cit., p. 114-19.

chooses to give Fischer advice about his game the advice which he gives is restricted to the above conclusion if the factual premises are true. "Given that you want to achieve E and that doing M is the one and only way of achieving E," that you should do M is the only legitimate and rational advice which can be given.[1]

> If a moral conclusion is ever related to non-moral premises in the fashion I have imagined, then, given that a moral conclusion is to be drawn, we have no choice as to which conclusion it shall be . . . given that the speaker is committed to offering some advice or other, the only advice that he can rationally offer is "You should do M."[2]

There is therefore some gap between the premises and the conclusion which cannot be closed by claiming that the conclusion is logically entailed by the factual premises, as Foot seems to argue. Rather, in Black's view:

> between the factual premises and the practical conclusion there is a sort of gap, bridgeable only by an agent's willingness to engage in the relevant activity or practice. The truth of the premises restricts the performance, whether that of "advising" or something else, to a single possibility, but there will be no performance at all unless the agent chooses to follow the path.[3]

The same holds true, Black claims, for less trivial examples of moral reasoning such as:

> Doing A will produce pain.
> Apart from producing the pain resulting from A, doing A will have the same consequence that not doing A would have had.
> Therefore, A ought not to be done.[4]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 109.

[2] Ibid., p. 111.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 113.

Here again one who is willing to give moral advice and who knows the factual premises to be true must by "virtual necessity" draw the above conclusion; it is the only possible moral conclusion which can rationally be drawn from these particular premises.

A similar argument is presented by J. R. Searle, who claims that given the existence of an institution or a game and given the rules which constitute these, moral conclusions can be derived from factual premises. As an example, Searle offers the following argument:

(1) Jones uttered the words "I hereby promise to pay you, Smith, five dollars."
(2) Jones promised to pay Smith five dollars.
(3) Jones placed himself under (undertook) an obligation to pay Smith five dollars.
(4) Jones is under an obligation to pay Smith five dollars.
(5) Jones ought to pay Smith five dollars.[1]

Searle argues that:

> . . . the relation between any statement and its successor, while not in every case one of "entailment," is none the less not just a contingent relation; and the additional statements necessary to make the relationship one of entailment do not need to involve any evaluative statements, moral principles, or anything of the sort.[2]

What is needed to understand the validity of this moral argument is a clear notion of the difference between types of descriptive statements and it is to call attention to at least two such types that Searle introduces the moral argument.

---

[1] J. R. Searle, "How to Derive 'Ought' from 'Is,'" Philosophical Review, Vol. LXXIII (1964), reprinted in Hudson, op. cit., p. 121.

[2] Ibid.

As paradigms of these two types Searle suggests the following:

Type 1: "My car goes eighty miles an hour."
"Jones is six feet tall."
"Smith has brown hair."

Type 2: "Jones got married."
"Smith made a promise."
"Jackson has five dollars."
"Brown hit a home run."[1]

All of these statements, Searle claims, state objective facts which can be judged empirically to be true or false and thus they all fit the characterisation of descriptive language which non-naturalists presuppose.[2] However:

> Though both kinds of statements state matters of objective fact, the statements containing words such as "married," "promise," "home run," and "five dollars" state facts whose existence presupposes certain institutions: a man has five dollars given the institution of money . . . We might characterise such facts as institutional facts, and contrast them with non-institutional, or brute, facts: that a man has a bit of paper with green ink on it is a brute fact, that he has five dollars is an institutional fact.[3]

The indicative sentences belonging to Type 2 are therefore ones which state institutional facts, though they may become "brute relative to" other statements.[4] The important feature of the institutional facts above which

---

[1] Ibid., p. 130.

[2] Ibid., p. 129. Searle cites Hare and Nowell-Smith as examples of contemporary moral philosophers who, on the basis of this understanding of descriptive language, consider evaluative language to be unique.

[3] Ibid., p. 130. Here Searle acknowledges his indebtedness to Anscombe's suggestions in the articles discussed earlier.

[4] Thus "Smith made a promise" states a fact which is brute relative to "Smith undertook an obligation."

is crucial to Searle's derivation of "ought" from "is" is that they presuppose institutions which are "systems of constitutive rules."[1] These institutions, i.e. marriage, promising, money, and baseball, are constituted by rules which make up these various forms of activity and which also regulate the conduct of one who participates in them. It is therefore by appealing to the constitutive rule of "the promising game," as Hare has labelled it, that Searle is able to derive an "ought" from an "is."

> It is often a matter of fact that one has certain obligations, commitments, rights, and responsibilities, but it is a matter of institutional, not brute, fact. It is one such institutionalised form of obligation, promising which I invoked above to derive an "ought" from an "is." I started with a brute fact, that a man uttered certain words, and then invoked the institution in such a way as to generate institutional facts by which we arrived at the institutional fact that the man ought to pay another man five dollars. The whole proof rests on an appeal to the constitutive rule that to make a promise is to undertake an obligation.[2]

Within this institution it therefore becomes a tautology that "one ought to keep one's promises." This is not an evaluative major premise giving a principle by which one has freely chosen to regulate one's behaviour, as Hare would argue in order to maintain the validity of the practical syllogism.[3] It is precisely because the

---

[1] Searle, op. cit., p. 131.

[2] Ibid., p. 131.

[3] Hare, "The Promising Game," Revue Internationale de Philosophie, No. 70 (1964), reprinted in Hudson, op. cit. Indeed here one point of contention between

argument from an "is" to an "ought" works in Searle's view without the introduction of evaluative premises that he claims we need to reconsider the entire distinction between descriptive and evaluative meaning upon which "Hume's guillotine" rests.[1] For what he claims to have shown is that there are some facts which can be described in indicative sentences which are clearly also evaluative, and often moral, as well. "If you like, then, we have shown that 'promise' is an evaluative word, but since it is also purely descriptive, we have really shown that the whole distinction needs to be re-examined" (underlines mine).[2]

A reconsideration of this matter is also encouraged by D. Emmet in her discussion of the nature of "social facts." After stating her fundamental agreement with the logical principle that no statements about what ought to be done can be derived from purely factual

---

prescriptivists and descriptivists is stated most clearly. Hare claims that "the constitutive rules of an institution may contain some tautologies, but they cannot all be tautologies, if they are going to prescribe that people act in certain ways and not in others" (underlines mine; p. 147). The dispute between them rests upon whether or not the constitutive rules of institutions are tautologous--as Searle claims--or non-tautologous and prescriptive --as Hare claims.

[1]Whether or not these additional statements are evaluative is the issue discussed by Hare, op. cit., McClellan and Komisar, "On Deriving 'Ought' from 'Is,'" and Thomson and Thomson, "How not to Derive 'Ought' from 'Is,'" both reprinted in Hudson, op. cit., p. 157-67.

[2]Searle, op. cit., p. 133.

statements, Emmet goes on to challenge whether such a distinction between purely factual statements and statements which are "valuationally loaded" can practically be made.[1] Her description of the two types of statements of fact is that Type 1 statements are "propositions giving interpretations of what is or was the case" and Type 2 statements are those which describe social relations or situations. Statements of the second type are "usually adduced as reasons supporting moral judgments or decisions," since "they are statements about people occupying various roles vis-a-vis one another."[2] The following could thus be offered as a valid non-syllogistic argument in which an "ought" is derived from an "is."

> "You ought to help her because, after all, she is your mother."[3]

In this argument, "the obligation to help is said to follow from the fact of parenthood. But the fact is not a mere fact; it is a fact of social relationship."[4]

---

[1] Emmet, Facts and Obligations (Dr. Williams' Library, London, 1958), p. 8.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Emmet, Rules, Roles, and Relations (Macmillan, London, 1966), p. 37. Cf. Facts and Obligations, p. 11-12, in which two other examples are offered: "X is your son, therefore you ought not to treat him like that," and "Since you are a doctor, you ought to respect the confidences of your patients."

[4] Ibid.

The validity of the argument from the statement of some social fact to an evaluative or moral conclusion is based on the fact that the notion of role is both evaluative and descriptive. Emmet defines a role as "a relationship of a recognized kind within a given society, with some notion of the kind of conduct appropriate to it built into its description."[1] A full definition of the role of "mother" therefore includes not only a factual, physical or biological explanation of this relationship but also an indication of the behaviour which can within a society be reasonably expected of one who fills that role.

> The notion of role, therefore, I suggest provides a link between factual descriptions of social situations and moral pronouncements about what ought to be done in them. It has, so to speak, a foot in both camps, that of fact and of value; it refers to a relationship with a factual basis, and it has a norm of behaviour built into it which is being explicitly or tacitly accepted if the role is cited as a reason.[2]

This is true, Emmet argues, both in the case of roles which are "purposively undertaken" and those which are "ascribed." As examples of the former kind, she mentions both the role of "statesman" and that of "doctor," in which the evaluative and descriptive meanings of these roles are closely interrelated.

---

[1]Emmet, Facts and Obligations, p. 8. Cf. Rules, Roles, and Relations, p. 40.

[2]Emmet, Rules, Roles, and Relations, p. 41. Cf. Facts and Obligations, p. 10.

> Role activities purposively undertaken are likely to have evaluative meaning not only in that some modicum of efficiency in the role is presupposed when according the name, but also that . . . the name may be withheld if certain generally acknowledged obligations of the role are not observed.[1]

Therefore, the fact that someone is a doctor or statesman not only gives sufficient grounds, in some circumstances, for the derivation of imperatives regarding what one ought to do as a doctor or statesman; this fact also can be changed or even denied should one fail to perform at least minimally the actions appropriate to it. It is therefore a social fact which requires the fulfillment of some obligations comprising part of the definition of the role in order to remain true.

The more difficult cases involve the derivation of imperatives from social facts which state one's ascribed roles, such as those of father or mother which are based on natural kinship relations. Here the interrelation of descriptive and evaluative meaning is further confused by the possibility of both natural and social definitions of this role. Whereas according to a natural definition of fatherhood, one's father will always be one's father regardless of his fulfillment or neglect of the appropriate duties or obligations, according to a social definition this role takes on distinctively evaluative characteristics, and a complete understanding of this

---

[1]Emmet, Facts and Obligations, p. 14-15.

role requires a consideration of the institution of fatherhood within a given society.[1] The conclusion to be drawn from this consideration of social relationships is that:

> . . . in cases where descriptions of facts are descriptive of social situations in which the relations are role relations, a rigid distinction between descriptive and prescriptive language cannot be maintained. When reasons for moral decisions are given by citing the facts of a situation, the situation may already be seen in terms of certain expectations as to appropriate conduct in it, if the situation consists of people in certain roles vis-a-vis each other, such as father and child, or debtor and creditor. So an agent in deciding what he ought to do, when he considers the facts, must associate or dissociate himself from these general expectations as to appropriate behaviour.[2]

Although Emmet, in particular, is not prepared to claim with Foot that an imperative conclusion is entailed by a purely factual description of social roles, she does argue that such a description may not be possible or practical. Descriptions of roles have, in her view, a dual logical force and can therefore entail evaluative and imperative conclusions. Such an analysis provides some insight into the nature of religious ethical decision as well since the part played by "role" is quite

---

[1]The complexities of this situation have been discussed by Emmet in both works cited above and by A. I. Melden, Rights and Right Conduct (Blackwell, London, 1959), and D. Z. Phillips, "God and Ought," Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy, ed. I. T. Ramsey (SCM Press, London, 1966), p. 133-9.

[2]Emmet, Facts and Obligations, p. 16.

important, particularly in understanding the relationship of God and man.

The possibility of deducing imperatives from indicative statements of role is also considered by A. N. Prior who offers the following example of such an argument:

> . . . since the two premisses "All church officers ought to be reverent" and "Undertakers are Church officers" jointly imply that undertakers ought to be reverent, the single ethical premiss "All Church officers ought to be reverent" implies that <u>if</u> undertakers are Church officers they ought to be reverent, and the single <u>non</u>-ethical premiss "Undertakers are Church officers" implies that <u>if</u> all Church officers ought to be reverent undertakers ought to be. In fact this non-ethical premiss "Undertakers are Church officers" implies that <u>whatever</u> all Church officers ought to do, undertakers ought to do.[1]

What Prior attempts to show in this example is that we need not arrange this argument in syllogistic form to understand its logic. The duties of undertakers, since they are "parasitic duties" based upon the duties of Church officers in general, can be deduced from a statement of these more fundamental duties. In this sense, he appeals to propositional (or class) calculus and quantification theory to claim that what holds of all Church officers will also hold of undertakers. Prior concludes

> that one simply <u>can</u> derive conclusions which are "ethical" in a quite serious sense from premisses none of which have this character. The undertaker, for example, who learns that

---

[1]Prior, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 203.

> he is a Church officer, can learn as a logical consequence of this something about his duty that he did not know before. This something will indeed require supplementation by other things--I mean other things of an ethical sort--before the undertaker is in possession of a precise recipe for action or abstention from action at place P and time T; but in this it resembles much else that nevertheless constitutes, as far as it goes, significant information about what one ought to do.[1]

The logic of this particular example and others like it, while not the logic of Hare's practical syllogism, is nevertheless the valid deduction of an evaluative or imperative conclusion from a descriptive premise and offers therefore a reasonable guide for the behaviour of undertakers.

In giving their account of moral reasoning, the descriptivists have challenged several of the major presuppositions of prescriptivism by insisting that the relationship both of descriptive and evaluative meaning and of indicative and imperative is really far more complex than the prescriptivist account would allow. This is so not only because indicative sentences are rarely in ordinary discourse just pure statements of brute fact but rather are sentences which are implicitly connected with the speaker's wants, needs, or purposes or which are descriptions of institutionalised or social roles and relations; it is so also because from such indicatives with dual logical force it is possible to derive imperatives which prescribe a course of action or value-judgements as to the nature of the object or

---

[1] Ibid., p. 206.

action described. A strict descriptivist would argue that such a deduction is based on the fact that certain descriptions of facts entail an appropriate evaluation of those facts; a mild descriptivist would argue that the deduction is "virtually necessary" since many descriptions of fact are "valuationally loaded" and therefore have the force of both description and evaluation. In either case, the challenge to "Hume's guillotine" has been given and a more intimate relation of fact and value has been explained. In Emmet's words, "we should be chary of elevating the non-deducibility of 'ought' propositions from 'is' propositions to the status of a 'law of logic' and still more, of baptizing it into this status as 'Hume's law.'"[1] Furthermore, the precise character of the independence of matters of fact from matters of value has been re-examined since both Moore's and Hare's formulation of this autonomy are considered unsatisfactory. This challenge to both versions of the naturalistic fallacy can therefore furnish the background for a discussion of another account of moral reasoning and decision in which some of the weaknesses of both prescriptivism and descriptivism may be resolved.

---

[1] Emmet, Rules, Roles, and Relations, p. 45.

CHAPTER IV

ONLOOKS AND DECISION

In their concern to offer an account of morality which avoids both the traditional dichotomy between fact and value and a dissolution of matters of value into those of fact, both Beardsmore in his Moral Reasoning and Phillips and Mounce in their Moral Practices provide some instructive criticisms of prescriptivism and descriptivism and point the way toward a more adequate understanding of the nature of moral decision-making.[1] As Beardsmore has stated the problem, both of the accounts of moral reasoning which we have just examined are attempts "to show how it is possible for factual reasons to provide a foundation for moral (or, more generally, evaluative) conclusions . . . "[2] and both these attempts rest on the presupposition that the link between factual reasons and evaluative conclusions can only be provided by some extra, elusive element. In Hare's analysis, this extra element is that of commendation or evaluation which is not derived from but added onto the descriptive meaning of statements in order to give

---

[1] R. W. Beardsmore, op. cit.; D. Z. Phillips and H. O. Mounce, op. cit.

[2] Beardsmore, op. cit., p. 68.

them prescriptive force. What allows the conclusion of evaluative or imperative sentences from factual premises is the presence of this commendatory element expressed in the neustic of the evaluative sentences. The descriptivist account relies in a similar way upon the notion of "human good" to facilitate moral reasoning. Thus an evaluative conclusion is validly drawn from factual premises if the extra element is assumed to be present, namely that the facts stated are in some way conducive to that good.[1] In the description of moral reasoning which is offered by Beardsmore, Phillips and Mounce this extra element is no longer necessary to understand the logic of the transition from "is" to "ought." Rather what is needed is a clear understanding of the context of moral practices which furnish the background for any particular instance of moral reasoning. As Beardsmore suggests:

> I do not think that moral argument can be explained as a process of linking reason and conclusion by some elusive extra element. Nor do I see why such an explanation should be thought to be necessary, why it should be thought to be the task of moral philosophy to interpret moral arguments as disguised syllogisms or as disguised means-end arguments.[2]

It is to provide this other kind of explanation that the notion of moral practices is introduced.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 70-1. Cf. Foot's introduction to Theories of Ethics (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1967), p. 13-15.

[2] Ibid., p. 71-2.

Phillips and Mounce find the principle weakness of the previous two accounts to be either the overstatement or the understatement of the role of decision in moral reasoning. According to the prescriptivist, it is always possible to distinguish between the descriptive and evaluative elements in statements and it is this evaluative element alone which is the result of decision. For example, it is possible according to this view to separate the descriptive from the evaluative elements in the statement, "You told a lie." Whether or not one uses this statement to express any sort of moral condemnation against the liar depends upon the speaker's decision to adopt as a principle the belief that telling lies is wrong; otherwise the statement simply describes someone's action and contains by itself no indication of praise or condemnation.[1] A person may choose whether or not to evaluate another's action in telling a lie and may only justify the particular evaluation chosen with reference to another principle which also is the function of individual decision. Thus, "a particular prescriptive judgement can be justified by reference to a 'principle' that is itself a piece of advocacy, something one has

---

[1] Hare tried to account for this in his discussion of words in which the descriptive and evaluative meanings have become habitually linked so that it may be rhetorical to ask, after learning that someone told a lie, "Yes, but did he do something wrong?" Hare is still bound, however, to the belief that description and evaluation are logically distinguishable and that a clear understanding of the nature of morality requires that such a distinction be upheld. Language of Morals, Chapter 7.

decided for oneself."[1] This overemphasis on the element of decision in morals represents moral reasoning as having no ultimate justification other than the particular judgement of the moral person and therefore as lacking an adequate ground on which to base moral principles.

The lack of an adequate grounding for moral decision is seen especially in Hare's discussion of the "way of life" of the moral agent. Hare claims that basic principles can in the end only be justified with reference to each other, a whole matrix of these practical principles being a "way of life." There is therefore no answer to the dilemma of a moral person who wants to know why a particular set of principles ought to be chosen over another.

> We can only ask him to make up his own mind which way he ought to live; for in the end everything rests upon such a decision of principle. He has to decide whether to accept that way of life or not; if he accepts it, then we can proceed to justify the decisions that are based upon it; if he does not accept it, then let him accept some other, and try to live by it.[2]

Two important criticisms have been suggested by N. H. G. Robinson against Hare's assertion regarding the limits of rational justification in morals. Hare has maintained that within a way of life, particular moral decisions are justified by reference to general principles chosen to guide one's behaviour. The only possible justification

---

[1]Phillips and Mounce, op. cit., p. 6.

[2]Hare, op. cit., p. 69.

for these principles could be in the form of a complete specification of the way of life to which one is committed and yet it is just such a total description which Hare also claims is impossible in practice. He claims that "if pressed to justify a decision completely, we have to give a complete specification of the way of life of which it is a part"; yet "this complete specification, it is impossible in practice to give . . . "[1] Such an "impossible possibility" is, as Robinson suggests, difficult to understand. For if one cannot specify completely the way of life which ultimately justifies one's principles and actions, then what possible role can such a notion as "way of life" play in decision-making? If, on the other hand, the way of life is "involved in" matters of practical decision, then has not a sufficient specification been offered?

> In short, anything and everything practicable is prescriptible in theory, or else nothing is prescriptible in theory until it is prescribed in practice. What the prescriptive theory needs at this point is a genuine element of objectivity which might overflow all our formulations of it, but that is precisely what it seeks to avoid; and if there is nothing but our formulations there is nothing to overflow them which might be the basis of a possibility in theory which is not a possibility in practice.[2]

When it comes to the justification of a way of life, the moral person can only remain silent; no further

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] N. H. G. Robinson, The Groundwork of Christian Ethics (Eerdman's, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1972), p. 64.

prescription is possible and the way of life rests fundamentally on the decision of the moral agent to adopt it.

This is to suggest an even more radical criticism of the prescriptive theory of morals, however, and that is its reliance upon an "ultimate and all-comprehending arbitrariness."[1] Robinson argues that the ambiguity which is fatal to Hare's account is contained in his demand that the decision with regard to a way of life be a moral one and at the same time a decision "upon which everything moral will rest."[2] What is lacking is any explanation of the grounds upon which such a decision itself might rest, since what would count as a good reason or as justification for a moral obligation can only be defined within a way of life.

> If we can gather all prescriptions together into a complete specification of a total way of life and still ask significantly "Ought I to decide for this way of life or not?" then morality overflows the sum-total of prescriptions and cannot properly be explained by reference to them alone.[3]

The choice then becomes clear: either this decision between two ways of life is an arbitrary one, perhaps based only upon which way I want to live, since no moral reasons can be offered for the choice, or Hare's account of what morality consists in needs revision in order to make the logic of this decision clear. Phillips and

---

[1] Ibid., p. 66.

[2] Ibid., p. 64.

[3] Ibid., p. 65.

Mounce would suggest that "a moral decision or judgement is intelligible only where there are certain things that are not open to judgement or decision" and that the lack of such a non-prescriptive foundation for decision in Hare's discussion accounts for our inability to fathom what such a choice between ways of life might be like.[1]

The understatement of the role of decision in moral reasoning which is to be found in the descriptivist understanding of morality presents difficulties which are equally problematic given the presuppositions of this account. Two of these especially are relevant to our considerations here. The first argument presented by both Beardsmore and Phillips is against the view that a given set of facts will yield automatically an "ought" or "should" proposition without the decision of the moral agent being required at all to explain the transition from "is" to "ought." What this analysis cannot account for is the possibility of "varied moral reactions" to the same set of facts about which those who disagree morally are in agreement. To complicate the example of the grocer who delivers potatoes to his customer, suggested by Anscombe, Phillips introduces a new fact, namely that

---

[1] Phillips and Mounce, op. cit., p. 12. That such a decision could not be the result of a practical syllogism is shown by Beardsmore, op. cit. He says that "on Hare's account the only connection which there can be between facts and decisions is a syllogistic one. And any syllogism would require a major premise which, since a way of life is the ultimate major premise, cannot be supplied here. Such a decision would therefore be a literally senseless act." (See p. 33-4.)

the customer is unemployed, and argues that a move from this factual premise to the imperative conclusion that the customer ought to pay the grocer for the potatoes is not a matter any longer of simply knowing what the facts are.[1] Indeed the grocer may well know the facts, including the fact that the institution of buying and selling provides a set of social facts by which obligations can be judged, and still say to his customer, "Forget what you owe me." The stationer, however, may not be so generous in his judgement and may still require the customer to pay the bill at his shop though he is in possession of the same facts as the grocer. A further example is suggested by Beardsmore and is drawn from Graham Greene's novel, The Heart of the Matter. Two characters in this novel commit suicide, one a non-Catholic named Pemberton and the other a Catholic police commissioner named Scobie.[2] Presuming that we could reach an agreement on the facts of each case and could be clear about what actually happened, is there any reason to suppose that we would also agree about the morality of such an action? Indeed it may be the case that for Catholics the action of suicide is considered to be wrong but that for non-Catholics the same action might be considered courageous or good. Such differences are significant moral disagreements, but it would appear

---

[1] Ibid., p. 123.

[2] Beardsmore, op. cit., p. 72f.

that they cannot simply be resolved by an appeal to the facts of the case; indeed they might prove to be irreducible to any set of facts upon which the two parties might agree.[1]

The problem which is raised by the possibility of moral disagreement given the same set of facts cuts even more deeply into the descriptivist account of moral reasoning, however, since, as Beardsmore and Phillips interpret it, moral reasoning is not just a matter of knowing or not knowing the facts but rather a matter of interpreting the significance or relevance of those facts. This is particularly difficult in the analogy offered by Black, namely that we can understand the logic of decision in morality by considering the decisions made within a game such as chess. Once a person chooses to be involved in the game, it is then not only possible for him to derive imperative conclusions from factual premises regarding the objectives or rules of the game; it is also the case that what moral conclusions one draws are only a function of certain facts being true.

> Just as in chess anyone accepting the facts of the case is committed to drawing a certain conclusion, so in morality anyone accepting the facts of the case is committed to a particular moral judgement. On this view, moral disagreement can stem only from ignorance of fact or lack of understanding.[2]

What is obscured by this analogy is the role which moral beliefs or moral practices play in determining which facts

---

[1] Ibid., p. 94. [2] Ibid., p. 75.

are important to the drawing of a moral conclusion. If the example that Black offers of reasoning within the context of a game (i.e., Fischer wants to mate Botwinnik. The one and only way to mate Botwinnik is to move the Queen. Therefore, move the Queen) is further complicated by the introduction of a new fact (such as the fact that Botwinnik is in poor health and might suffer a severe shock if he is mated by Fischer), not only are the possibilities of valid moral advice increased but the moral advice which one does offer will depend upon a judgement about the importance of the facts which one knows.

> The confusions in the above argument [i.e. Black's] are due in part to a mistaken view of "facts." True, within a given moral viewpoint, the facts will bind those who share it to similar moral conclusions. But, for them, the facts already have moral import. It is not a case of moral conclusions being deduced from non-evaluative factual premisses. Black thinks that the facts bind one to moral advice which he regards as "the single possibility" in the situation. But . . . the moral advice one thinks one ought to give will be determined by one's moral beliefs; it is such beliefs which give the facts their relevance and significance.[1]

The role of moral beliefs is equally important in the case regarding suicide already mentioned. Whether or not one regards the fact that Scobie caused his own death by taking an overdose of drugs as sufficient grounds for condemning his action and whether one claims that this fact entails the evaluative conclusion that Scobie did something wrong is a function of the moral import of

---

[1]Phillips and Mounce, op. cit., p. 129-30. Cf. Beardsmore, op. cit., p. 74.

this fact which is in turn a function of the differing moral beliefs of the witnesses to this event.

Foot would most likely argue that it must be true for the person who condemns the suicide as wrong that this condemnation bear an "internal relation" to the action itself. It is not the arbitrary decision of a Catholic to condemn suicide but rather this condemnation is intimately bound up with the very description of the deaths of Scobie and Pemberton. As an appeal for the rational justification of moral beliefs on the basis of common evidence, and for the grounding of those beliefs in matters of fact, this notion of the relationship of fact and value might be acceptable. What Foot wants to argue, however, and what the descriptivist account in general tends to suggest, is that no one could refuse the verdict given by Scobie's wife and their priest, Father Rank, by claiming that he does not <u>see</u> the facts that way.[1] Provided that the connection can be shown between the belief that committing suicide is wrong and some notion of what is detrimental to the goal of human flourishing, it should be possible, on the descriptivists' analysis, for all of us to agree on the condemnation of suicide. However, as Beardsmore and Phillips have argued, this is to beg the question. For what is at stake here is precisely what Catholics and non-Catholics consider to be

---

[1]See especially Foot, "Moral Beliefs," p. 84.

the value of human life and this is a matter about which they may never reach agreement.

> The conversation at Fellowes' dinner party shows this. Several guests are discussing Pemberton's death. Both Scobie and his host accept just the same facts as evidence for the claim that Pemberton committed suicide (he strangled himself with a length of cord attached to a picture-hanger); nevertheless they judge his action differently. For Fellowes it is clear that "a chap's got the right to take his own life." For Scobie suicide is "the unforgivable sin." But this is not because they disagree over the facts, but because the facts have a different significance for them.[1]

What will determine this significance is the belief which is held by the participants in the dispute regarding the nature of human life and the resulting obligations which are bound up with that life. To claim that the case can be decided merely by knowing the facts is not to offer a completely satisfactory account of the logic of moral decision in cases such as this one.

That an analysis of the role of beliefs or attitudes in moral decision-making is crucial should by now be fairly clear, for the centrality of these in some moral decisions must surely suggest to us that an examination of their logic is necessary. John Lemmon suggested such an investigation in his essay on moral dilemmas, for he claimed that the arguments which resolve some dilemmas facing the moral person cannot be accounted for by the traditional logical approach.[2] Perhaps an example will

---

[1] Beardsmore, op. cit., p. 94.

[2] John Lemmon, "Moral Dilemmas," Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy, ed. by I. T. Ramsey (SCM

serve to illustrate this point; it is a well-known and oft-quoted one from the writings of Sartre.

> . . . I will refer to the case of a pupil of mine, who sought me out in the following circumstances. His father was quarrelling with his mother and was also inclined to be a "collaborator"; his elder brother had been killed in the German offensive of 1940 and this young man, with a sentiment somewhat primitive but generous, burned to avenge him. His mother was living alone with him, deeply afflicted by the semi-treason of his father and by the death of her oldest son, and her one consolation was in this young man. But he, at this moment, had the choice between going to England to join the Free French Forces or of staying near his mother and helping her to live. He fully realized that this woman lived only for him and that his disappearance --or perhaps his death--would plunge her into despair. He also realized that, concretely and in fact, every action he performed on his mother's behalf would be sure of effect in the sense of aiding her to live, whereas anything he did in order to go and fight would be an ambiguous action which might vanish like water into sand and serve no purpose. For instance, to set out for England he would have to wait indefinitely in a Spanish camp on the way through Spain; or, on arriving in England or in Algiers he might be put into an office to fill up forms. Consequently, he found himself confronted by two very different modes of action; the one concrete, immediate, but directed towards only one individual; the other an action addressed to an end infinitely greater, a national collectivity, but for that reason ambiguous--and it might be frustrated on the way. At the same time, he was hesitating between two kinds of morality; on the one side, the morality of sympathy, of personal devotion, and, on the other side, a morality of wider scope but of more debatable validity. He had to choose between these two.[1]

Press, London, 1966), p. 279. By a "traditional logical approach" Lemmon suggests "the logic of imperatives, deontic logic, and what not."

[1]J. P. Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism, transl. by P. Mairet (Methuen, London, 1948), p. 35-6.

The problem which characterises this dilemma and which makes it interesting for an analysis of attitudes is the fact that "the arguments which try to establish exactly what one's moral situation is are not distinguishable from those which attempt to resolve the dilemma itself."[1] Indeed, as Lemmon further suggests, "the dilemma is so grave a one, personally speaking, that either decision in effect marks the adoption on the part of the agent of a changed moral outlook."[2] An even more extreme case of this type of dilemma is suggested by the example of Chamberlain's negotiations with Hitler in 1938. In this situation a moral person is called upon to make a decision "of a recognizably moral character though he is completely unprepared for the situation by his present moral outlook."[3] The dilemma requires for its satisfactory resolution some kind of creative extension of the boundaries, or even a complete reformulation, of one's moral outlook.

In both the dilemmas which Lemmon describes it would seem that the models of decision we have so far discussed are inadequate for providing a framework within which to understand the resolutions required. On the one hand, decisions of principle do not seem to be required not simply because a conflict of principles may be involved, but more especially because "part of the very dilemma is just one's uncertainty as to one's actual moral situation,

---

[1] Lemmon, op. cit., p. 276. Underlines mine.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 277.

one's situation with respect to duties, obligations, and principles."[1] It will not do to say that Sartre's pupil could resolve his dilemma by choosing a universalisable principle such as "Always act out of personal devotion."[2] Not only is it possible that this is a principle which the young man will not choose to live by in future dilemmas of this kind, that is, one which he may formulate simply to deal with this situation and no other; but furthermore, as Sartre says, the man is "hesitating between two kinds of morality," and it is just at the point of such a decision regarding one's way of life that the principle-model is unable to shed light on matters. On the other hand, the facts upon which a resolution of these dilemmas might be based are not altogether clear-cut. What is interesting about the situations mentioned is not just whether one or any moral conclusion will be entailed by the description of the case facing the moral person but precisely how this person can and will come to some understanding of and decision about the character of his dilemma. Sartre's pupil is faced with two sets of facts, those regarding his relationship with his mother and those regarding the Free French Forces and their struggle against an aggressor. What is required on his part is some sort of

---

[1] Ibid., p. 274.

[2] Sartre in this particular essay does seem himself to fall victim to the same search for a universalisable moral principle and it could justifiably be argued that the one he wants to suggest is in the end quite inadequate itself to deal with this dilemma. Op. cit., p. 50-3.

choice as to which facts have the most significance for him and it is unlikely that that choice will be a straightforward deduction from any new, all-inclusive set of facts which might be proposed. Chamberlain's situation is even more difficult since precisely what was needed on his part was a judgement as to the kind of person he was dealing with and the very real possibility of deception as to Hitler's character as well as the urgency required make this not simply a matter of knowing or not knowing all the facts. What the facts are has to some extent to be decided in this dilemma and, though there may be a reasonable limit to the number and types of descriptions which could be offered of the problems facing Chamberlain in 1938, yet it will not be helpful to oversimplify the ease with which one might come to understand these facts and thereby know the obligation which follows from them.

A careful analysis of the logic of attitudes and of their relation to moral decision-making has been offered by Donald Evans in his book The Logic of Self-Involvement.[1] His work, which is an attempt to provide a framework within which religious language might be understood and appraised, suggests also a way in which statements of fact and moral imperatives are related in the formation of attitudes. Evans' analysis owes a great

---

[1]SCM Press, London, 1963.

deal to the work of J. L. Austin and it is with this new understanding of language in general proposed by Austin that we should begin this discussion of attitudes. The importance of Austin's work is both his questioning of the traditional divisions of language accepted by grammarians and logicians preceding him and his exploration of the nature and implications of the illocutionary force of language. As he interprets it, the implication of traditional grammar and logic is that only those sentences actually make sense which state facts, refer to facts, or describe some objects.[1] Meaning and truth are thus to be determined by reference to the relevant facts being stated or described. Only statements of fact, or indicative sentences, are capable on this account of being considered true or false, and other statements, having no referent, can have no truth-value or claim to meaning and are therefore considered "nonsense." It was just this "nonsense" which fascinated Austin and which he intended to investigate and clarify.[2]

One of the claims he made which is important for our analysis here is that not all indicative sentences are descriptions or statements of fact. The examples which interested him were those which bear every outward resemblance to statements of fact, namely those sentences which have "as it happens, humdrum verbs in the first

---

[1] J. L. Austin, How to Do Things with Words (Oxford University Press, London, 1962), p. 1-4.

[2] Ibid., p. 4.

person singular present indicative active."[1] Yet these utterances "do not 'describe' or 'report' or constate anything at all, are not 'true or false'; and the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as saying something."[2] These sentences Austin labelled "performatives" and he hoped that by considering the logic of performatives he would be able to undermine the assumptions that to say something is always to state that something is so and that doing and saying are two entirely different acts. The examples with which Austin began his exploration were:

> "I do." (spoken in a marriage ceremony)
> "I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow."
> "I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth."[3]

In each of these cases the standard of judgement as to truth or falsity by reference to the facts simply does not apply, for to utter these sentences is not to describe or refer to anything, but to do it.

The meaning of this type of utterance, Austin suggested, should be ascertained by reference to the "illocutionary force" of the language and it is this which constitutes his second important contribution to our study of attitudes. He makes explicit for the philosophical study of language the need for and possibility of outlining a type of meaning which does not

---

[1] Ibid., p. 5.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

involve merely the traditional notions of "sense and reference."[1] The meaning and validity of performative utterances is a function not simply of their content but of two other major factors which provide them with illocutionary force: the circumstances in which the utterance is made and the conduct, motives and purposes of the speakers. In the first example, the utterance "I do" requires the proper institutional setting for it to make sense and it will be subject to "infelicities" if the circumstances under which it is spoken are not right. One of the necessary conditions for "the smooth or 'happy' functioning of a performative" is thus that:

> A.1 There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further, the
> A.2 particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.[2]

Secondly, the performative requires that certain conduct and feelings or thoughts accompany its utterance and the absence of these could also cause it to be infelicitous. Thus:

---

[1] Ibid., p. 100. Austin intended to distinguish the illocutionary force of language from its meaning but as Evans points out it is more helpful in understanding self-involving language to say that illocutionary force is part of meaning. Op. cit., p. 71, n. 1. Hare's debt to Austin's work can surely also not be overlooked since in many ways Hare is making the same kinds of appeals with regard to the commendatory or evaluative force of language.

[2] Ibid., p. 14-15.

> The procedures must be executed by all participants both correctly and completely.
>
> Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further must actually so conduct themselves subsequently.[1]

It was Evans' intention in his work to explain more fully the implications and commitments of performative language and in particular to show the way in which one's attitudes, feelings, and practical commitments are related to the things one says. For this reason, his first task was to classify the various types of performative utterances which there are and then to indicate which of these are specifically self-involving. What we have seen in the descriptivist account of moral reasoning is an attempt to point out the essential relatedness of fact and value such that their arbitrary attachment to each other by the decision of a moral agent is precluded. The prescriptivist notion that any such move from fact to value, or from indicative to imperative, conceals a hidden evaluative premise, and thus also a decision of the agent to commend the facts, needs also to be taken into consideration. The attempt to explore the possibilities of a non-propositional logic may help not only to clarify the nature of this controversy but also to indicate the role of religious faith in moral decision.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 15.

Only then can such issues as the autonomy of value or the naturalistic fallacy be judged with precision and fairness.

Evans' classification of performative utterances depends upon the type of action which is done by the speaker in speaking. Constatives are those utterances which use verbs like estimate, guess, warn, report or argue and by which the speaker refers us to some other state of affairs. Examples would be:

I guess that there are 394 steps to the top of the Cathedral tower.
I warn you that it will rain this afternoon.

Constatives have an abstractable factual content which can itself be judged for its truth, accuracy, or correctness independently of the speaker's intentions or feelings. They differ from mere statements of fact in that the speaker has actually performed an action by saying them; that is, he has issued a warning or made a guess. A full account of their meaning must therefore include a consideration not only of their content but also of the speaker's action in uttering them. Commissives are another type of performative in which the speaker commits himself to some action and is thereby involved in that which he says. Examples might be:

I promise to pay you the money I owe.
I intend to finish this dissertation.

Here the content of the utterances cannot be judged in the same way as constatives for the state of affairs which is suggested by the sentences has not yet come about. The

facts, that the money owed is paid and that the dissertation is finished, can only be judged as fulfilled or unfulfilled, and this judgement, along with an understanding of the speaker's intentions and conduct involved in the utterance, would indicate the meaning of commissive performatives. A third type of performative is the exercitive by which the speaker exercises his authority in such a way that he brings about a new state of affairs. Thus:

I order you to stop smoking.
I authorise you to act on my behalf.

These performatives do not necessarily have an abstractable factual content at all; thus your acting on the speaker's behalf is not judged as true or false but as obedience or conformity to the speaker's authority. It is only after such actions have been carried out that we can state them as constatives which can be judged true or false. Behabitives are a fourth type of performative which often do not have a subordinate clause at all. Examples would be:

Thank you.
I apologise for my behaviour.
We praise thee, O Lord.

These utterances do have factual presuppositions regarding the situation out of which the speaker is thanking, praising or apologising and they do often have factual content. The action performed here by the speaker is twofold: 1) these utterances establish a relationship with the hearer and thus place the speaker into a context of social

behaviour and 2) they imply the speaker's attitude toward or intention with regard to the person addressed and are thus self-involving. The final class of performatives, verdictives, includes utterances in which the speaker says what is so on the basis of opinion, judgement, or appraisal. Thus:

> I find you guilty of manslaughter.
> In my opinion, she is very beautiful.

The content of the verdictive is not strictly factual as in the case of the constative but a description of the object, person, or event in question is indeed crucial to the judgement which is made. Opinions and judgements are not simply private matters but can be assessed as reasonable, true-to-reality, or adequate.[1]

This rough sketch of the types of performative utterance has allowed us to isolate the self-involving performative language in which attitudes are implied, namely behabitives, and it is to an analysis of attitudes specifically which we now turn. By attitudes we mean the disposition or posture of a person which is expressed or implied in the statements a person makes and by which others know that the speaker is for or against something and whether it is important or unimportant to him. We cannot be said to know what someone's attitude is unless we can roughly classify his relation to that about which he speaks into one of four categories: against/important, against/unimportant, for/important, for/unimportant.[2]

---

[1] Evans, op. cit., p. 30-40. [2] Ibid., p. 122-3.

Attitudes are implied, as we have said, in behabitives and particularly in explicit behabitives they are most easily recognised. Explicit behabitives would be:

I am sorry for offending you.
I welcome this opportunity of speaking to you.
I commend Smith for being so polite on that difficult occasion.

In these utterances, the speaker is taking up a definite posture towards some person, event, or object and it is the force of the behabitive to relate the speaker to his subject in whatever way he chooses. The act of taking up a posture towards something is thus performed by the behabitive through speech. The utterance also provides a framework for a relationship with the subject, a relationship which is now to be determined by the type of posture the speaker considered appropriate and adopted. Behabitives have factual presuppositions, that the speaker has indeed offended someone or that he has in fact been asked to speak, and also factual content, that Smith has on some occasion been polite. These provide the setting for the utterance and are the conditions to which the speaker is responding by the adoption of an attitude. In the case of explicit behabitives, the implication of an attitude is strong and definite so that it would render the utterance meaningless if the speaker were to deny actually holding the attitude. Explicit behabitives thus have an indefeasible implication of attitudes and are self-stultifying if the speaker were to disclaim what is implied.[1]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 46-7.

Other statements in which attitudes are implied are non-explicit behabitives though in these the implication is not so strong or definite. Consider, for example, the many utterances made which contain words with dual logical force, words which both describe and evaluate.[1] It is Evans' suggestion that the analysis of such words concentrate on the explicit performatives for which these words are a sort of shorthand. Attitudes are contained in utterances making use of these words either by prima facie or by contextual implication. The second example of an explicit behabitive given above, "I welcome this opportunity of speaking to you," would also imply an attitude if the speaker were to say, "This is a truly wonderful occasion at which I speak." Here the implication is prima facie, since it is possible for the speaker to deny having the attitude of gratefulness but he must explicitly disclaim it if he is not grateful. This can be a weak prima facie implication, in which the speaker can deny that he even implies an attitude at all and in fact must do so if he is to be understood, or a strong one, in which he can deny having the attitude but cannot deny that he implied it in what was said. Attitudes might also be implied in utterances for which the context provides the implication. Our speaker might say, "This is a distinguished and eminent group which I am about to address." As the opening remark of an important

---

[1] Ibid., p. 58, n. 1. Evans here suggests a preliminary list of such words found under "ca" in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary.

address, this utterance implies the speaker's gratitude by virtue of the context in which it is said, and indeed the speaker can rely on the belief in the appropriateness of this attitude within a particular social group to give his words the performative force of a behabitive. It might be the speaker's intention, however, to use this sentence only in a descriptive way so that after characterising the group to whom he is speaking he might well deny that this was an appropriate occasion on which to feel grateful.[1]

From an examination of many types of utterance in which attitudes are implied or expressed, Evans was able to specify four distinct elements involved in attitudes: feelings, opinion, behaviour, and intention. A person could give an indication of the attitudes he holds by expressing any one of these four elements, thereby making explicit the posture he has taken with regard to some subject. In the attitude, sorrow, a person's feelings are the important element and one might express this attitude by saying, "I <u>feel</u> sorry for having offended you." The feelings which are most relevant to attitudes are those which are associated with or arise out of our relationships with others or with the world, rather than those such as pain or illness which are associated with private experience. An attitude in which feelings are not prominent is one in which one's opinion about something

---

[1] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 47-50.

is crucial. In saying, "I commend Smith for being so polite on that difficult occasion," what is important is not the way the speaker feels about Smith or about his being polite, but rather his assessment of the situation in which Smith acted and that action itself. As an opinion implies a judgement made with regard to something, whether s u c h an opinion receives the support of one's feelings or not may be irrelevant. A statement about one's past, present, or future behaviour can also be indicative of one's attitude and, likewise, there are attitudes in which this behaviour is the most critical element. The utterance "I always respect my supervisor's directions" indicates that the speaker's non-verbal behaviour as well as his statements to other manifest his attitude toward another person, and, in this case, that behaviour in relation to his supervisor is crucial to the holding of the attitude, respect. Finally, a statement regarding one's intention reveals attitudes as well. Thus, "I plan to be a hard-working student" not only describes a future course of action upon which the speaker intends to embark but also implies his commitment to bring to fulfillment some attitude he now has toward hard work and the role of a student. As a commissive utterance this statement is self-involving for the speaker's attitude is intrinsic to the behaviour he intends to perform. Evans claims that although any one of these elements alone is neither necessary nor sufficient for the presence of an attitude, yet they are each important

to a greater or lesser degree in the different kinds of attitudes one can take up.[1]

In his description of attitudes, Evans draws a clear distinction between feelings and attitudes and between expressions of each. In this respect his account of the meaning of attitude expressions will differ from that of Stevenson who considered both types of expression to be instances of emotive meaning. For Evans, an expression of feeling is the means by which the speaker gives another person access to his private, internal mood or affect at any given time. It is similar to a report and is therefore dependent upon a given state of affairs for its accuracy. It is important when one expresses one's feelings to exhibit some kind of "feeling-revealing behaviour" such that the expression can be verified, for one is implying by such expressions that a corresponding mental, physical or emotional state is present at the time of the utterance.[2] The content of an expression of feeling is not a matter of choice and in this way these expressions are like descriptive sentences. The sincerity of an expression is a function both of the speaker "meaning what he says" and also of his <u>having</u> the feeling which he claims to have.[3] In his analysis of moral language, Stevenson does not appear to subscribe to the same understanding of the descriptive nature of expressive language.

---

[1] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 116-123.

[2] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 88.

[3] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 82.

> Broadly speaking, there are two different purposes which lead us to use language. On the one hand we use words (as in science) to record, clarify, and communicate beliefs. On the other hand we use words to give vent to our feelings (interjections), or to create moods (poetry), or to incite people to actions or attitudes (oratory).
>
> The first use of words I shall call "descriptive," the second, "dynamic."[1]

His account does not attempt to analyse the content of expressions but is concerned with placing into two broad categories the uses to which all language can be put. He has therefore thrown together some very different kinds of expressions into the category "dynamic" or "emotive."

> The emotive meaning of a word or phrase is a strong and persistent tendency . . . to give direct expression (quasi-interjectionally) to certain of the speaker's feelings or emotions or attitudes; and it is also a tendency to evoke (quasi-imperatively) corresponding feelings, emotions, or attitudes in those to whom the speaker's remarks are addressed.[2]

An attitude according to Stevenson includes such things as "purposes, aspirations, wants, preferences, desires . . ." and it is clear that no attempt to distinguish between these will be made.[3]

Attitudes, as distinct from feelings, have other elements involved in them, namely opinions, intentions, and behaviour, and it is the presence of these elements which gives expressions of attitude their performative force. Attitude expressions must therefore be judged on

---

[1] Stevenson, Facts and Values, p. 18-19.

[2] Ibid., p. 21-2.

[3] Stevenson, Ethics and Language, p. 3.

the basis of what the speaker does in uttering them; he does not merely give vent to something inside but rather appraises, intends, or acts. In this respect, the content of these expressions cannot be said to be true or false for no claim is being made regarding an inner state of affairs; what is crucial in the utterance is the action of the speaker in saying it. Two of the elements in attitudes may be expressed in similar ways to feelings; thus we can express our intentions or our opinions or we can say that we have each of these. Yet, opinions and intentions are matters of decision and imply that the speaker has "created" them for himself. One creates the intention "I plan to be a hard-working student," by saying this in certain appropriate circumstances (i.e., the speaker must in fact be a student) and by meaning it.[1] The sincerity of the expression cannot be judged in the same way as feeling-expressions since the descriptive element has become irrelevant. To express intention or opinions is to use language in a performative way and in so far as these elements are crucial in expressions of attitudes, that language is also performative.

Direct expressions of attitude are given in utterances which Evans terms "onlooks," a word which he coined "as a substantive for what it is to 'look on x as y.'"[2] If one is asked one's attitude towards something,

---

[1]Evans, op. cit., p. 83.

[2]Ibid., p. 125.

the structure of one's reply would be "I look on x as y." Examples of onlooks would be the following:

I look on this task as a waste of time.
I consider Jim to be a close friend.
My life is a pilgrimage toward heaven.
I look on Henry as a brother.

In each of these expressions, there are two actions which are implied and which give the expressions performative force. One is a judgement as to the nature, character, function, or importance of the subject and the other is a commitment to treating or acting toward the subject in a certain way. An onlook is therefore "a fusion of a decision-that x is like y with a decision-to treat x like y."[1] Onlooks are thus composed of two performatives, verdictives and commissives.

The verdictive element in onlooks indicates that the speaker has valued, rated, judged, evaluated, or formed an opinion about the subject and the onlook expresses what he considers to be the case with regard to that subject. The onlook cannot be judged as a constative by checking the descriptive content of the utterance with some corresponding state of affairs, for the utterance represents a decision made by the speaker. The onlook is the result of his having reached a verdict with regard to some subject and verdicts are judged by their appropriateness, reasonableness, or adequacy. Two elements are fundamental in this verdict. On the one hand, to make a judgement about something one must

---

[1] Ibid., p. 137.

consider the relevant facts, characteristics, qualities, or nature of the subject. An adequate verdict is one which is well-formed, one which is the result of a careful deliberation and a reasonable study of the subject so that the resulting opinion is justifiable and fair. To a certain extent, a verdict can therefore be descriptive of the subject and can convey a certain amount of information regarding the matter in question. What is distinctive about onlooks, as opposed to statements of fact or even expressions of feeling, is that this verdictive element is the result of a decision about the facts, a decision which is not altogether determined by the facts but which is not independent of them either. Logically, the speaker is free in his appraisal of the subject and it is this choice which gives his onlook its performative force. On the other hand, the verdictive element implies a scheme or structure into which the speaker places the subject. The subject is ascribed some status or assigned some role to play within a particular structure; in doing this the speaker is giving "a sort of private, unofficial Exercitive."[1] Again this distinguishes the verdictive from a constative in which such a scheme of things is not implied.

The commissive element in onlooks is the performative by which the speaker chooses to treat x like y, and it is at this point that we begin to see the close

---

[1] Ibid., p. 127.

relationship which exists between verdictives and commissives in onlooks. For this commitment means first of all an initial willingness to look on x as y in order to reach a decision about x; indeed the verdict could not be reached without this openness to seeing x as y so that it can be carefully considered. The verdict in an important sense cannot be rendered unless one actually takes up a position with regard to the subject and, again, this taking of a position is not essential to statements of fact in which one's purpose is just to describe. The commissive element is of greater consequence than this, however, for the future behaviour of the speaker toward the subject is implied. The onlook will have behavioural consequences in the continuing relationship of the speaker and the subject and for this reason there is a seriousness associated with the deliberation.[1] An onlook therefore strongly implies that the speaker is committing himself to some policy of behaviour toward x, behaviour which is also appropriate to y and to which the speaker may already be committed in relation to y. In many onlooks the behaviour implied is non-verbal and indicates that what the speaker has undertaken is a whole set of actions in relation to the subject by which his intention will be fulfilled. The onlook thus declares that intention and implies that certain actions are to follow as a result. Indeed the imperatives which the speaker will give himself

---

[1] An onlook is thus not a matter of saying, "Let's pretend that x is like y."

in the future with regard to his action in relation to the subject will be derived from this onlook and will be indicative of the fulfillment of the speaker's intention implied in the onlook. The onlook thus declares an intention which will direct the course of the relationship between speaker and subject in the future.

The interaction of these two elements, verdictive and commissive, can best be illustrated by an examination of the different types of onlook which there are. The examples which we have given are of two kinds: literal and non-literal. In a literal onlook, such as "I look upon this task as a waste of time," or "I consider Jim to be a close friend," the comparison which the speaker has made between x and y is fairly obvious and the reasons for this judgement can be made explicit.[1] It is possible in each case for the speaker to justify his verdict by giving the qualities or characteristics of x which have led him to form the opinion that it is like y. The basis for the comparison can be shown by the speaker describing exactly those characteristics of the task he is now performing which have led him to the conclusion that it is indeed a waste of time. Not only is the verdict fairly straightforward, but the intention of the speaker is as well. Certain actions are appropriately expected of one who considers another person to

---

[1] Ibid., p. 129-30.

be a close friend and those actions will fulfill the commitment made by the speaker. The content of literal onlooks is thus verifiable both by examining the reasoning by which the speaker reached his judgement and by observing his behaviour in relation to the subject.

Non-literal onlooks, however, are not able to be checked in quite the same way. The basis for the comparison between x and y in a non-literal onlook cannot be shown without referring to the attitude of the speaker and thus this type of onlook may not be understood by someone who does not share a certain rapport with the speaker's point of view. What is expressed in the onlook is the belief that the way of behaving towards x is the same as the way of behaving towards y.

> When we use the formula "look on x as y," we assume that there is an appropriate way of thinking and behaving in relation to y, so that we are committing ourselves to a similar way of behaving and thinking in relation to x.[1]

An analogical onlook, such as "My life is a pilgrimage toward heaven," is a type of non-literal onlook in which the speaker claims to find similarities between x and y without actually saying that x is literally y. There is an "independent similarity" which the speaker's life and a pilgrimage toward heaven bear toward one another so that it would be odd for the speaker to add after stating this onlook, "but it really is not."[2] In a parabolic onlook, of which many religious onlooks are examples,

---

[1] Ibid., p. 131.

[2] Ibid., p. 132.

the basis for the comparison may not be obvious at all since there is no abstractable content by which the similarity of x and y could be judged. Thus in "I look on Henry as a brother," Henry may bear no resemblance either in character or behaviour to the speaker's brother or to any kind of a brother at all; yet the speaker makes the comparison in a parabolic way by reference to his attitude. In a parabolic onlook, the only similarity which the speaker is suggesting is that the feelings and behaviour appropriate in relation to y are in some way like those appropriate in relation to x.[1] The most that is said by way of comparing x and y is, "x is such that the attitude appropriate to y is similar to the attitude appropriate to x."[2] The speaker indicates his judgement that Henry is a brother to him but the only way in which he can explain what he means by this is to make reference to his attitudes, that is, to say that the attitude and behaviour one would have toward a real brother is the same as that which the speaker has toward Henry.

Evans indicates two ways in which the notion of onlook can be useful for analysing the logic of moral decision. There is a tendency in explaining decision to claim that the judgement as to the character of the subject, x, can be conducted objectively and that as a result of this investigation one can commit oneself to a certain behaviour toward x. This would represent decision as a

---

[1] Ibid., p. 131-2. [2] Ibid., p. 133.

matter of describing x and then, as a result of the description, choosing to treat it a certain way. Thus a moral decision would look like this:

> x and y are similar in having features a, b, and c. I am for (against) whatever has features, a, b, and c. Hence I am for (against) x.[1]

Since the comparison of x and y is, on this model, taken as a purely descriptive enterprise, so that the statement "x is like y" is a statement of fact, the value-judgement bears no relation to the comparison at all. Here, value appears as a function of likes or preferences and in this way its autonomy is maintained. However, as Evans claims,

> This is a distorted account, because the first premise is overly-simplified. x has features similar to the features a, b and c which y possesses; but the decision <u>that</u> features a, b and c are relevant and that there is sufficient similarity for me to "look on x as y" is not entirely independent of the decision <u>to</u> "look on x as y." That is, such judgements concerning relevance and similarity depend in part on a Commissive or intentional element.[2]

On the other hand, moral decision might be represented as having no verdictive element so that one's intentions bear no relationship with one's judgements. A decision would be like this:

> I am for (against) x.
> I am also for (against) y even more definitely and clearly.
> So I allege that there are some similarities between x and y.[3]

---

[1] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 136.

[2] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 137.

[3] <u>Ibid.</u>

On this account, the judgements of the moral agent are taken as a function of his commitments and are thus "epiphenomenal," for what is really important is only that the judgement as to the similarity of x and y lend support to the commitments which the person already has. This account does not take seriously the speaker's attempt to arrive at a fair and reasonable appraisal of the subject and therefore does not consider that the speaker is in fact claiming something about the reality of x and y. It therefore also represents a distorted model of decision-making.

What is clear in expressions of onlook is that neither the verdictive nor the commissive element can be reduced one to the other, for an onlook is "a fusion of a decision-that . . . with a decision-to . . . ."[1] For,

> if I do deliberate concerning the formulation or acceptance of a typical onlook, it is misleading to depict the logical structure of this deliberation either in terms of a decision-that and a decision-to which are completely independent, or in terms of a decision-that which is totally dependent on a decision-to.[2]

The notion of performative force can thus help to clarify the logic of the relationship of fact and value in moral decision-making since the way in which value is autonomous can now be explained as follows:

> The particular non-entailment which is emphasized by the "autonomy of value" is an instance of a more general feature of language: If an utterance does not have performative force F^1,

---

[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid.

> it does not entail an utterance which does have performative force F^1. Since a flat Constative, by definition, does not have Behabitive or Commissive force, it cannot entail an utterance which does. That is, in other terminology, "No statement entails a value-judgement." The non-entailment which is stressed by the "autonomy of value" depends on a difference in performative force between two utterances.[1]

Moral reasoning makes use of onlooks which do have performative force. Therefore from indicative sentences expressive of this onlook, imperatives are legitimately derived for the future behaviour of the speaker since his intentions and commitments are bound up in the closest way with his beliefs and judgements.

Iris Murdoch has perhaps stated this most clearly in her essay on "Vision and Choice in Morality."[2] The doctrine of the strict separation of fact and value has led us to assume that moral concepts are "commendations of neutral areas." What we should consider is "the way in which a moral outlook is shown in ramifications of more specialized concepts which themselves determine a vision of the world." A moral argument may proceed from stating facts to rendering value judgements; however, "such arguments take place within a moral attitude where some sovereign concept decides the relevance of the facts and may, indeed, render them observable." Thus,

---

[1] Ibid., p. 59-60.

[2] Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy, p. 195-218.

> There would, indeed, scarcely be an objection to saying that there were "moral facts" in the sense of moral interpretations of situations where the moral concept in question determines what the situation is, and if the concept is withdrawn we are not left with the same situation or the same facts. In short, if moral concepts are regarded as deep moral configurations of the world, rather than as lines drawn round separable factual areas, then there will be no facts "behind them" for them to be erroneously defined in terms of.[1]

If a moral onlook represents the speaker's commitments and his judgement as to the character of the world, then fact and value are not strictly separable within that onlook. The freedom of the moral person is thus not his "being able to lift the concept off the otherwise unaltered facts and lay it down elsewhere, but in being able to 'deepen' or 'reorganize' the concept or change it for another one."[2] This analysis by no means cuts the moral agent off from the world of "brute facts" nor does it make him peculiarly immune from "the way things really are." We cannot legitimately conclude from the statement, "No flat Constative entails a value-judgement," that therefore "No external state of affairs affects a man's freedom in making a (truly) moral decision." Nor can we claim that "A man ought not to allow any external state of affairs to affect his freedom in making a moral decision."[3] What this view does allow for is an intimate

---

[1] Ibid., p. 214. The preceding quotes are all to be found on this page.

[2] Ibid., p. 215.

[3] Evans, op. cit., p. 65. Cf. Murdoch's analysis of the logical and moral arguments involved in the notion of the autonomy of value. Op. cit., p. 212-15.

relation between a person's judgement as to what is the case and his commitment to moral action, a relation in which a transcendent may play a critical part, and which the exposure of the "naturalistic fallacy" cannot destroy.[1]

---

[1]Murdoch, op. cit., p. 215. Cf. Evans, op. cit., p. 65-6.

CHAPTER V

ONTOLOGICAL ETHICS

Paul Tillich is a theologian who has analysed morality both from within and without the context of the Christian faith. As a Christian ethicist, he sets out the nature of morality within a doctrinal system and attempts to show the dependence of Christian ethical demands upon systematic theological claims.[1] As one who is concerned with the nature of morality in general, Tillich describes in an ontological analysis the logic of ethical decisions as they derive from metaphysical statements regarding the nature of man's being and of being-itself. These descriptions are interesting for two reasons: first, because the relationship which Tillich devises between religious assertions and ontological statements is indicative of his unique contribution to the philosophy of religion, and second, because the philosophical ethic which he does develop indicates a definite reliance upon religious affirmations. Our study of the relationship of indicative and imperative in Tillich's thought will centre around three primary

---

[1] Tillich, Systematic Theology (the combined volume edition of James Nisbet & Co., Welwyn, Herts., 1968), Vol. I, p. 35f., hereafter abbreviated ST, I, II, or III.

areas of concern. We will need to describe in the first place the confusion between religious and ontological indicatives which makes a study of his ethic so difficult. Secondly, we will analyse the logic of decision both in Tillich's general understanding of ethics and in his specifically theological exposition. Finally we will examine the transformism of Tillich's ethic by which it will become clear that religious affirmations which are not made explicit in his analysis of moral decision have in fact been presupposed throughout and thus have a transforming effect upon the nature of the moral indicative as Tillich interprets it.

The nature of the relationship between ontology and the religion of the Bible is the subject of Tillich's little book, Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality,[1] and it is within this exposition that his philosophical method for analysing religion and the religious ethic becomes plain. The presupposition of this work is that biblical religion and the philosophical study of ontology do confront one another on the same level and are therefore in danger of conflicting or even of becoming incompatible with one another.[2] It is

---

[1]Biblical Religion and The Search for Ultimate Reality (University of Chicago, Chicago, 1955), hereafter abbreviated BRSUR.

[2]This must be balanced with Tillich's statement in ST I, p. 30, that a conflict between theology and philosophy is not necessary, "nor is a synthesis between them possible. A conflict presupposes a common basis on which to fight. But there is no common basis between theology and philosophy." Tillich seems to mean by this remark that any confrontation of theology and philosophy

therefore his intention to show that "they have an ultimate unity and a profound interdependence."[1] Religion as both "divine revelation and human reception"[2] and philosophy as "that cognitive endeavour in which the question of being is asked"[3] face one another on the battle-field of truth but it is Tillich's contention that both are really fighting on the same side for the same goal.[4] In order to show this Tillich analyses that aspect of human existence which both inspires philosophical inquiry and at the same time indicates a readiness for the reception of religious revelation, namely "the search for ultimate reality."

Tillich defines this as the search for the "really real."

> The search for ultimate reality beyond everything that seems to be real is the search for being-itself, for the power of being in everything that is. It is the ontological question, the root question of every philosophy.[5]

It is this quest for that which lies beyond our finitude and all other aspects of the human predicament which furnishes the existential motive for the pursuit of philosophical truth. This motive is a longing "for a

---

takes place within one discipline or the other, for there are no problems common to both about which each could have a conflicting view, without entering the other's territory. See comments by J. Heywood Thomas, Paul Tillich: An Appraisal (SCM Press, London, 1963), p. 44-5.

[1] Tillich, BRSUR, p. 1.

[2] Ibid., p. 21.

[3] Ibid., p. 5.

[4] Ibid., p.10. Cf. ST I, p. 24.

[5] Ibid., p. 13.

form of being that prevails against non-being in ourselves and in our world" and thus it is most deeply a longing for the power of being.[1] This longing Tillich finds to be the underlying theme of many different types of philosophy. In each Tillich describes the involvement of the philosopher's personal existence in his task, an involvement in which the philosopher commits himself to the project of discovering the nature of ultimate reality and in which he must always maintain a critical and sceptical attitude toward the findings of his search.[2] It is this subjective aspect of the philosophical task which Tillich correlates with the subjective meaning of biblical religion, a confrontation which he claims "will bring us to the point where the positive relation between biblical religion and ontology comes to light for the first time."[3] For "the situation of man in the state of asking for ultimate reality" corresponds to "the situation of man in the state of faith"; they are related on the model of question and answer.[4] It is at this point that one already has the impression that the project is contrived by Tillich, for the questions about ultimate reality arise from the human situation in which the longing for the power of being is profoundly experienced, so that the form of the answer is predetermined

---

[1] Ibid., p. 14.

[2] Ibid., p. 19-20.

[3] Ibid., p. 43.

[4] Ibid.

by this search.[1] Tillich's argument is that religious revelation can and indeed does provide the answer to the problem of man's existence so his analysis of biblical religion will work towards a definition of faith which will show this correlation in its simplest form. "Faith is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern," a grasping which has the consequence of allowing man not only to make the ultimate ethical decision with regard to his life, namely to determine his own destiny, but also to participate in a community in which his social nature will be fulfilled.[2] Thus defined, faith is shown as the fulfillment of and the answer to the quest for ultimate reality which characterises human existence.

Tillich concludes as a result of this analysis that there is a "structural identity" of ontology and biblical religion by which the elements of the philosopher's quest for ultimate reality can be shown to be analogous to the elements of religious faith. Both are driven by ultimate concern. Both require courage in the face of non-being. Both involve participation in the concrete actualisation of the power of being over non-being. Both depend upon trust in this power of being.[3] On the basis

---

[1] Cf. Heywood Thomas, op. cit., in which he expresses this as a feeling "that the argument moves inexorably towards its predetermined conclusion" (p. 30).

[2] Tillich, BRSUR, p. 51. Cf. p. 45-8.

[3] Ibid., p. 63.

of this, Tillich claims that

> the ultimate concern about truth which drives toward the search for ultimate reality is a part of the ultimate concern about one's existence as a person, as a being who is able to ask the question of his being and of universal being.[1]

As a result of this superficial identity Tillich goes on to say that the ontological meaning of the biblical faith reveals it to be the answer to the search for ultimate reality, and, in all three possible areas of conflict between the subjective side of biblical religion and ontology, faith can be shown to encompass and perfect the passionate quest characteristic of each, uniting them into one movement of the soul from the finite towards the infinite. Ontology presupposes the possibility of a revelatory experience in which the eyes of the philosopher will be opened; it is just this possibility which religious conversion, experienced as "being grasped," encompasses and fulfills.[2] Likewise the philosophical ethic which is characterised by the polarities of freedom and destiny, participation and obedience, essential and existential being, finds these conflicts resolved and transcended by the biblical ethic of grace and love.[3] Finally the solitude of the philosopher driven by "eros" towards the true and the good is not denied but fulfilled by the religious

---

[1] Ibid., p. 64 (underlines mine).

[2] Ibid., p. 65-6.

[3] Ibid., p. 68-9.

experience of *agape* in which the possibility of "participation with ultimate reality, or reunion with being-itself" is created.[1] It is at this point already obvious that there is a great imbalance in Tillich's argument caused by the hidden presupposition that the divine is impinging upon the human in biblical religion in a way which it does not do in philosophy, and it is this which makes the correlation of biblical religion and ontology so difficult to understand. If Tillich's point is simply that religious assertions do contain ontological ones, and that one cannot discuss or resolve issues in biblical religion without taking ontology seriously, then the point is well taken. What is here being claimed, however, is that the two are able to be correlated, being resolved by simple equations. Ontological participation in the ground of being, philosophical conversion in which one is "able to see true reality," and the longing for truth are all transformed in the light of their religious counterpart into grace, faith, and love (*agape*), a transformation which is unsatisfactory because the real differences between the two are made to seem insignificant and superficial.

This correspondence of ontology and biblical religion is carried further by Tillich's discussion of the object of this ultimate concern. The description of the object is again prefigured in Tillich's definition of the nature of the quest; it is obvious therefore that

---

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 71-2.

the object of man's unconditional interest is ultimate reality. The word "ultimate" is well chosen here for it is descriptive both of the strength of man's longing for the power of being or the extent of his concern for his own existence as well as of the object of man's search, that which will satisfy the longing and resolve the problems of existence. Only that which is ultimate can be the subject of our infinite interest; "only that which is the ground of our being and meaning should concern us ultimately."[1] The use of the word "should" here illustrates one of the difficulties pervading Tillich's ethic; for while it appears to have imperative force and Tillich himself wants to give it moral meaning, it really has meaning only as part of the definition of ultimate concern as that which drives the quest for this reality. What could be an imperative for religious faith derived from God's holiness is made here to be part of the definition of some aspect of human existence and thereby takes on the force of necessity. Tillich thus claims to have moved from an understanding of human existence, the most significant aspect of which is man's concern for ultimate reality manifested in both religious faith and philosophical inquiry, to statements regarding the nature of this reality which is being sought.

This existential grounding of religious claims, by which religious indicatives are shown to be correlated

---

[1] Ibid., p. 51.

to indicatives regarding human existence by definition, is driven further by an analysis of the ontological meaning implicit in religious claims. What biblical religion really says about God and what the various doctrines of that religion are intended to symbolise is that God is this ultimate reality, the ground of our being and meaning.[1] Ontology, as "the word of being, the word which grasps being, makes its nature manifest, drives it out of its hiddenness into the light of knowledge,"[2] is essential to these affirmations not only because it is presupposed by them but also because religious symbols "demand" an ontological interpretation.[3] It then becomes Tillich's task both in his explication of Christian doctrines and in his analysis of Christian ethical imperatives to bring this ontological meaning to light. The circle is thus completed; what begins from human experience as a passionate and self-involving quest for ultimate reality now finds itself resolved in an object whose nature and meaning is perfectly correlated to the presuppositions out of which the quest arose. From this preliminary analysis of Tillich's methodology and presuppositions regarding the nature of religious and ontological statements, it is possible to foresee the two parallel lines of thought which he will take with regard to the characterisation of morality. On the one hand, he will be

---

[1] Tillich, ST I, p. 24.

[2] Tillich, BRSUR, p. 6.

[3] Ibid., p. 73.

concerned to articulate the significance of moral action with regard to human life in general and in this respect his analysis can be seen as a new version of a natural law ethic. On the other hand, he will argue for the inclusion of Christian morals in a whole scheme of doctrinal assertions which are not superfluous to the nature of that morality and in this respect he develops an understanding of theonomous ethics. Both these lines of thought require careful examination.

Tillich, as Midgley has argued, bases his ethic upon a rational understanding of the essential nature of man's being which is also considered the telos of man or the law of human nature.[1] It is the presupposition of just such a possible grounding for ethics that indicates Tillich's rejection of the tenets of positivist ethics, culminating in the ethical relativism of existentialist philosophies. In the first place, Tillich rejects the mistrust of metaphysics which stems from a fundamental scepticism regarding the ability of man to transcend himself and to know the nature of any reality other than the finite, empirical one of which he is a part. Tillich's ethic is dependent in its methodology and its conclusions upon the ability of man's reason to know the character of his own essential nature and the structure of reality as a whole. This can be seen in Tillich's argument that

---

[1] L. C. Midgley, Beyond Human Nature: The Contemporary Debate over Moral Natural Law (Brigham Young University Press, Provo, Utah, 1968), p. 22.

ontology is inescapable for ethics, that the norms upon which ethics is founded must have ontological standing.

> Whenever the ontological foundation of justice was removed, and a positivistic interpretation of law was tried, no criteria against arbitrary tyranny or utilitarian relativism were left.[1]

All forms of morality, according to Tillich, must be dependent upon or presuppose an ontology; a picture of man and his relationship with the world and with his essential being is the basis upon which ethical imperatives are founded, to which they conform, and which they bring to fulfillment or realisation.[2] The proper way to begin the development of an ethical theory is thus to ask the primary question: "Where must we look within encountered reality to discover the source of the ought-to-be in being?" The answer to this question can only be realised in an ontology of values by which Tillich hopes to prove that man's essential nature is the only suitable foundation for morality and in which his metaphysical realism will be demonstrated.[3]

In the second place, Tillich does not see any validity in the claim that it is not possible to derive an "ought" from an "is," that is, an ethical imperative

---

[1]Tillich, Love, Power and Justice (Oxford University Press, New York, 1960), p. 55-6. Hereafter abbreviated LPJ.

[2]Ibid., p. 72-7. See also Tillich, Morality and Beyond (Fontana Library, London, 1969), Chapter 1 (hereafter abbreviated M&B), and Tillich, "Is a Science of Human Values Possible?", New Knowledge in Human Values, A. H. Maslow (ed.) (Harper, New York, 1959).

[3]Midgley, op. cit., p. 25f.

from a statement of the nature of reality or of the essence of man. He takes his stand firmly on the side of ethical naturalism by asserting that an analysis of the essential nature of man necessarily entails an understanding of that which is demanded of man, namely the fundamental ethical imperative. Indeed the greatest danger of the positivism he was rejecting was the resultant relativism or even nihilism with regard to morality.[1] As opposed to the existentialist assertion that values are created and given validity by human choice, Tillich intends to show that there are pre-existing values and that only these values can do justice to the contingencies and contradictions implicit in human existence. Tillich insists upon a basis in ontology for the formulation of ethical norms and for the making of moral decisions. Three questions are therefore primary in his study and illustrate his rejection of positivism and existentialism with regard to the nature of value: "Are there any absolutely valid values? How are they related to reality? What is their ontological standing?"[2] It is here that Tillich's analysis of human existence plays a crucial role, for this analysis has convinced him that no valid ethical principles can be derived from existence in its distorted and estranged state. He seems here to be retaining the negative insights of existentialism regarding

---

[1]See Hans Jonas, "Gnosticism and Modern Nihilism," Social Research, Vol. 19, No. 4 (1952), p. 430-452.

[2]Tillich, M&B, p. 18. Cf. Midgley, op. cit., p. 11.

the dehumanisation of life, the alienation and estrangement of man from man and from the essence of human life, in order to prove not only the necessity for but also the truth of values founded in ontology.[1] The verification he would offer for such an understanding of morality would be to say, as Midgley suggests, "if life is meaningful on the basis of an understanding of ontological concepts, then those concepts are true."[2]

Tillich develops this ontological ground of values in his description of existential and essential being and it is here that we begin to see the identity of "ought" and "is" in his ethic. One of the concerns of Tillich's Systematic Theology is to analyse the nature of existence as man actually lives it and to provide the solution to the quest which characterises this existence. As existence is characterised by finitude, self-contradiction, and ambiguity, so essence will be described as that which overcomes finitude, resolves self-contradiction, and ascribes meaning. Tillich offers as a preliminary definition of essence, "the nature of a thing," or "the quality in which a thing participates," or "a universal," but what is more important to his understanding of morality is that essence is "that from which a being has 'fallen,' the true and undistorted nature of things."[3] For by this definition, what is

---

[1] Midgley, op. cit., p. 13.

[2] Ibid., p. 31.

[3] Tillich, ST I, p. 225.

essentially is identical with what ought to be existentially.

> Man as he exists is not what he essentially is and ought to be. He is estranged from his true being. The profundity of the term "estrangement" lies in the implication that one belongs essentially to that from which one is estranged.[1]

Corresponding to the nature of estranged existence is the threefold characterisation of man's essence. Firstly, it is that to which man really belongs; it constitutes the structure of his being and is thus the innermost law of his being. In this sense it judges man and, though man is alienated from his essence, he cannot escape this judgement which stays with him as the commanding law over against him. Secondly, essence is that which empowers man's existence, giving it the power which comes with participation in being. While existence is characterised by its powerlessness to overcome separation and self-contradiction, essence is potential being which is rooted in the power of being-itself, God. Thirdly, man's essence is that which would fulfill his existential striving for unambiguous life and which would allow the actualisation of his essential possibilities. In this sense, essence is the telos of human existence.

Morality thus arises out of the relationship of man with his essence and it is this essence which defines the norms man is to obey and creates the conditions for the fulfillment of them.

---

[1] ST II, p. 51-2.

> This means that for Tillich there is an objective and absolute moral standard; but, as a further point, it does not mean that there is an objective set or system or moral laws, known to man, which man has the unchanging duty to observe and apply.[1]

It is for this reason, namely that the content of such systems is "historically conditioned," that Tillich "sets aside the traditional conception of natural law" in favour of one which is more person-centred. Morality, for Tillich, is a matter of becoming a centred self, that is, becoming a person.

> In man complete centredness is essentially given, but it is not actually given until man actualizes it in freedom and through destiny. The act in which man actualizes his essential centredness is the moral act. Morality is the function of life by which the realm of the spirit comes into being . . . A moral act, therefore, is not an act in which some divine or human law is obeyed but an act in which life integrates itself in the dimension of spirit, and this means as personality within a community. Morality is the function of life which the centred self constitutes itself as a person; it is the totality of those acts in which a potentially personal life process becomes an actual person.[2]

To be moral is thus not simply to obey an imperative but to be true to oneself; to be immoral is to be involved in falsehood and self-contradiction. Morality is thus the link between the truth of human essence experienced as the demand for self-consistency and the power of that essential being experienced as the demand for the self to be actualised as a person. The knowledge of this

---

[1] N. H. G. Robinson, op. cit., p. 285. Cf. Tillich, ST III, p. 49-50.

[2] Tillich, ST III, p. 40. Cf. M&B, p. 12.

essential being through ontology thus becomes the basis for the derivation of ethical imperatives which necessarily follow from these indicatives of man's own being.

With the basis of morality thus identified with man's essence, both the autonomy and the unconditionality of morals can be maintained. In speaking of autonomy, Tillich shares the concern of Kant that the categorical imperative be self-imposed and this, for him, means not only that the moral law is known by reason but also that it is the law of man's own being.[1] The law of one's essence is not experienced or known as an imperative placed upon man by an alien or foreign power demanding his obedience; rather it comes from within man and belongs to him. The same holds true of the unconditional nature of the moral demand. No existing thing, no object or fact which is altogether bedingt (conditioned), nothing belonging to existence, could place an ultimate demand upon us, but only we ourselves commanding ourselves.[2] In this way morality is unconditional in the sense of being of ultimate seriousness because it is the means of self-realisation; "it puts our essential being as a demand against us."[3] Thus nothing other than man's essential being could

---

[1] Tillich, "Is a Science of Human Values Possible?", p. 195. This is not to speak of logical autonomy, a subject to be discussed later.

[2] Tillich, Theology of Culture, R. C. Kimball, ed. (Oxford University Press, New York, 1964), p. 136. Hereafter abbreviated as TC.

[3] Ibid.

place a demand upon him which requires his unconditional obedience and nothing else could be of ultimate significance to man's existence.

> The law is not strange to man. It is natural law. It represents his true nature from which he is estranged. Every valid ethical commandment is an expression of man's essential relation to himself, to others and to the universe. This alone makes it obligatory and its denial self-destructive. This alone accounts for the unconditional form of the moral imperative . . .[1]

Yet this understanding of the unconditional demand has a hint of inevitability about it, and thus it is robbed of its particularly moral character. Tillich asserts that man's ability to act responsibly in his existence also "enables him to act against the moral demand. He can surrender to the disintegrating forces which tend to control the personal centre and to destroy its unity."[2] However, one wonders whether such self-contradiction is really possible given the definition of the unconditionality of this demand, for "the silent voice of our own being . . . denies us the right to self-destruction."[3]

Tillich states his version of a natural law ethic in such a way that morality appears to be completely independent of religious claims. The fundamental moral "ought" arises from the nature of man's essence as that to which he belongs, from which he is estranged, and which empowers his existence in the world. Thus, "it is

---

[1] LPJ, p. 76-7.

[2] M&B, p. 11.

[3] Ibid., p. 17.

because the law is of one's essence that it is imperative, and . . . it is in its imperativeness that its essentiality is experienced."[1] Such an identification of the moral "ought" with its ontological ground makes it difficult to understand how religious indicatives could be related to moral imperatives at all except in a superficial way. However, Tillich does not leave the matter here; he is concerned to develop an understanding of the theonomous character of morality in which the fundamental relatedness of religious indicatives and moral imperatives can be demonstrated. His method for doing so is, as we anticipated earlier, to make the ontological foundation of the moral imperative synonymous with the ontological meaning of religious claims. Thus God's revelation of himself throughout the Bible and particularly in Christ as the New Being can be expressed in religious indicatives, the real meaning of which is to say something about man's existence in the world, his estrangement from his essence, and his relationship with Being-itself. This reduction of the meaning of religious claims, while it supports Tillich's interest in maintaining the autonomy of a morality derived from religion in the Kantian sense, nevertheless becomes problematic since Tillich does not really come to terms with the full meaning of the claims which are most necessary to support

---

[1]George A. Lindbeck, "Natural Law in the Thought of Paul Tillich," Natural Law Forum, Vol. 7 (1962), p. 86.

his interpretation of morality. These two problems, the nature of a theonomous morality and the interpretation of religious indicatives, need to be examined carefully before we can evaluate Tillich's description of the logic of decision in religious morality.

Tillich's formulation of theonomous morality is an attempt to avoid the dangers and inadequacies which he sees implicit in autonomous and heteronomous morality and to resolve the difficulties accompanying these alternative accounts. For Tillich, autonomy could mean three different things, only one of which need be maintained in a theonomous account of morality. Firstly, Tillich claims that the positivist and existentialist understandings of morality rest upon a notion of the autonomy of values and the freedom of each individual with regard to such values which Tillich rejects as having dangerous and unavoidable consequences. Any attempt to "make ethics independent of ontology" leads to total ethical relativism in which the validity of moral values becomes a problem for which there is no adequate solution. The attempt to claim that there is no moral law standing over against man's existence which both compels and empowers his obedience to it is untenable; it represents our refusal to recognise the unconditional demand which alone can resolve and bring to fulfillment the dilemmas and ambiguities described by existentialists. This appears to be for the most part a moral rather than a logical argument against this version of the autonomy of morality. The second notion of

autonomy which is not to be rejected by but rather subsumed under a theonomous morality is what Tillich calls the "autonomy of ethical research."[1] This seems to be the attempt to conduct an investigation into the nature of values which is free from any dependence upon a particular tradition or any specific cultural and historical content given to morality. However, as Tillich argues,

> . . . this argument disregards the fact that even the seemingly autonomous research in philosophy in general and ethics in particular is dependent on a tradition which expresses an ultimate concern, at least indirectly and unconsciously. Autonomous ethics can be autonomous only with respect to scholarly method, not with respect to its religious substance.[2]

Tillich seems here to argue that the philosophical method, which he appears to assume is an objective, impersonal description not unlike a scientific method, cannot find the resolution to the ultimate concern which motivates its search in such a disinterested description of morality. This claim would of course only hold true given that Tillich's description of the project of philosophy is true and that indeed every such philosophical attempt has a religious substance implicit within it.[3] The third sense of autonomy which Tillich uses as the basis for

---

[1]Tillich, ST III, p. 285.

[2]Ibid.; underlines mine.

[3]It appears, however, in this case, as in others, that this is an unfalsifiable claim.

theonomous ethics derives from the definition of the word, autos nomos, the inner law.[1]

Tillich's argument against heteronomous ethics is that it makes moral decisions subject to the laws or norms or will of a power alien to man. Not only is heteronomy unsatisfactory because the fundamental moral law must be self-imposed, it is also incapable of providing an adequate reason or motivation for obedience to it.[2] If motivation for the making of moral decisions is a function either of an ultimate concern or of the project of the person to become a centred self, then only something like "the inner law of one's being" can fulfill that motivation or be its adequate object. Any attempt therefore to formulate a religious ethic in which a person is made subject to the will of God external to his own human nature is an instance of such imposition characteristic of heteronomous ethics. Presumably this is also the reason for Tillich's polemic against "theological ethics" as a discipline which is attempting to determine the nature of morality from without or prejudice a reasoned inquiry into the moral law on the basis of a particular, historical content given to that law.[3] The presupposition of this attack on a religious, heteronomous ethic reveals again the way in which Tillich treats the meaning of religious indicatives. Not all those who claim that

---

[1] See above, p. 168-9.

[2] TC, p. 136.

[3] ST III, p. 284-5.

morality is a matter of obedience to the will of God would claim that God is a stranger to human existence nor that his will is alien. On the other hand, one need not necessarily have to say that God is not a stranger nor his will alien because this will is identifiable with the law of our own essential being.[1] For Tillich, however, this choice is clear: either one accepts that the will of God is the law of our essential being or one adopts the view that God's law is foreign to us and therefore cannot in a meaningful way command our obedience.[2]

Tillich considers the inadequacies of autonomy and heteronomy great enough to develop a new understanding of morality as theonomous and it is this which he attempts to describe in philosophical terms in Morality and Beyond. Here he demonstrates what he calls the religious dimension, source, and element in morality. Religion is defined as "the self-transcendence of the spirit toward what is ultimate and unconditioned in being and meaning," and morality, which is obedience to the unconditional moral imperative, "gives ultimate seriousness . . . to religion."[3] As a correlate to the seriousness which morality gives to the religious quest, Tillich defines the religious dimension of morality as

---

[1] Cf. Paul Ramsey, Nine Modern Moralists (Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1962), p. 184.

[2] LPJ, p. 76.

[3] M&B, p. 9-10.

precisely "its unconditional character."[1] Since unconditionality is "the awareness of our belonging to a dimension that transcends our own finite freedom," both religion and morality are constituted by the same aspect of human existence, namely the transcendence of a person toward that which is ultimate.[2] Morality is thus religious in so far as it is characterised by this quest for an unconditional demand beyond finite existence. Religion is not only present in the nature of the project of morality, it is also present in its solution. The appropriate unconditional demand for an autonomous morality is, as we have already seen, "that man become actually what he is essentially, a person within a community of persons."[3] Thus formulated, this demand can only arise from a religious source, a source which is itself transcendent or ultimate, which is absolute or unconditioned and which also empowers a person's obedience to it. This religious source, Tillich claims is agape. It is agape which "transcends the finite possibilities of man" and which includes within itself the demands of justice that each person be acknowledged as a person.[4] Thus it is agape alone which can provide the content in terms of specific moral imperatives by which the unconditional moral demand can be fulfilled. The religious element in morality is also constituted by the

---

[1] Ibid., p. 14.

[2] Ibid., p. 17.

[3] Ibid., p. 30.

[4] Ibid., p. 35, 33.

religious source, agape, for it can provide the motivation needed for moral obedience by creating the conditions for its own fulfillment. Since the unconditional demand to become actually what we are essentially "presupposes the contrast between our essential and our actual being," it alone does not have the power which can move us to be obedient to it, namely grace.[1] Grace is constituted both by an objective aspect, since it creates "a state of reunion in which the cleavage between our true and our actual being is fragmentarily overcome, and the rule of the commanding law is broken," and a subjective aspect which is our "acceptance of the message that we are accepted."[2] The religious element in morality thus "fulfills what the moral imperative demands" and further motivates the actualisation of our true selves in existence.

One cannot fail to be impressed again by the ease with which Tillich correlates religion and morality on the basis of definitions. Our dissatisfaction is, however, not only with the circularity of the argument but with the real ambiguity which is introduced by this description of theonomous morality. Firstly one wonders whether there is any difference in content between theonomous and autonomous morality. Is autonomous morality as obedience to the inner law of one's essence implicitly theonomous or does the theonomous character of morality make a significant

---

[1] Ibid., p. 44-5. [2] Ibid., p. 58, 49.

difference to it? The precise distinction between theonomy and autonomy may be more apparent than real. On the other hand, however, Tillich has so defined autonomous morality that it simply cannot be realised without a religious source and motivation. The religious notion of agape is by definition that which compensates for the inadequacies of autonomous morality and it is this maneouvre which seems to make theonomous morality possible at all. Is morality thus dependent by definition upon religion and unable to be "united with its own depth" without agape?[1] If this is the case, then it is clear that we need a further explanation of the basis upon which such a claim for agape and for theonomous morality is being made. Tillich claims:

> In a theonomous situation reason actualizes itself in obedience to its structural law and in the power of its own inexhaustible ground. Since God (theos) is the law (nomos) for both the structure and the ground of reason, they are united in him, and their unity is manifest in a theonomous situation.[2]

Theonomy therefore represents the highest unity to be achieved in the essential structure of being, thus requiring that both autonomy and heteronomy be resolved in the actualisation of theonomy.[3]

---

[1] ST I, p. 94.

[2] Ibid.

[3] That this process is somewhat similar to a dialectic has been suggested by Midgley, "Paul Tillich's New Science of Values," Western Political Quarterly, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1962), p. 250.

In the Systematic Theology, Tillich claims that "actual theonomy is autonomous ethics under the Spiritual Presence."[1] It is by the description of such a "presence" that Tillich hopes to show the relevance of specifically Christian claims for morality and to strengthen his argument for the grounding of moral imperatives in the structure of essential being. The spirit, Tillich claims, is a dimension of life in which man experiences "the unity of power and meaning in himself" and by which he is able to understand the Divine Spirit which appropriates and transcends his own.[2] Likewise, man's spirit is itself a manifestation of the Divine Spirit experienced by man as a dimension of life which is ultimate.[3] The character of this Spiritual Presence is its ecstatic quality experienced as a "meaning-bearing power" in which man participates and which he can actualise in his own creativity.[4] The two "creative manifestations" of this Presence are faith and love, both of which derive from the "transcendent union" experienced by man as a reunion of his existential and essential being. In his definitions of faith and love, Tillich succumbs to the circularity we first examined in Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality, and here again the outcome is equally unsatisfying. Faith is known and experienced by man before the Spiritual Presence as the striving for a life beyond the ambiguities

---

[1] ST III, p. 285.

[2] Ibid., p. 118.

[3] Ibid., p. 120-21.

[4] Ibid., p. 122, 124, 127.

of this existence and can thus also be called "ultimate concern." However, since this striving is a function of man's spirit and since his spirit is a manifestation of the Divine Spirit, faith cannot find fulfillment except as man is grasped or opened up by the Spiritual Presence. Faith thus is "the state of being grasped by the transcendent unity of unambiguous life" which then invades the conflicts, contradictions, and ambiguities of existence allowing man to participate in that which is unambiguous.[1] Likewise love can be found "in all the functions of the mind" and has "roots in the innermost core of life itself." As such, love is both a drive of life itself manifested as the human striving for reuniting that which is separated and "an impossibility for the human spirit by itself." It is faith which "embodies love as the state of being taken into that transcendent unity" and thus the Spiritual Presence brings about the unity of being which fulfills the strivings of human emotion, will and intellect. At this point Tillich claims

> in relation to God the distinction between faith and love disappears. Being grasped by God in faith and adhering to him in love is one and the same state of creaturely life. It is participation in the transcendent unity of unambiguous life.[2]

The question which must now be considered is whether the content of all religious claims will in the same way be translated into statements about man himself and whether

---

[1] Ibid., p. 137, 142. [2] Ibid., p. 147.

such a translation can do justice either to the objective content of these claims or to their moral implications.

In The Courage to Be, Tillich attempts to describe the character of the relationship between God and man in terms of man's experience of courage.[1] Courage is defined as an attitude of self-affirmation in spite of the threat of non-being and, since it is being alone which can and does overcome non-being, courage requires by definition an ontological foundation. It is this very foundation, however, which deprives the notion of any ethical connotation it might have for courage becomes the manifestation in man of the overcoming of non-being on the level of essential being. Courage is thus a necessary part of human existence in so far as that existence is already indicative of the overcoming of non-being.[2] However, Tillich wants to make courage more than this in that it is also defined as an attitude which overcomes all forms of anxiety and despair. These forms of non-being are the ones which threaten the very heart and depth of man's existence, the most difficult being the anxiety of meaninglessness and emptiness threatening man's spiritual self-affirmation.[3] It is the experience of this anxiety which

---

[1]Fontana Library of Theology and Philosophy (Collins, London, 1969); hereafter abbreviated CTB.

[2]How precisely the creation of man can serve both as an overcoming of non-being and as the actualisation of further separation, since there are now many existing beings, is a very difficult issue to understand in Tillich's thought.

[3]Tillich, CTB, p. 169-173.

Tillich describes as the boundary of the human situation and it is just here that man can experience or be grasped by absolute faith.[1] At this point the courage to be becomes "an expression of faith and what 'faith' means must be understood through the courage to be."[2]

Yet Tillich also claims that this faith and courage are revelatory and give us some insight into the character of God. "The courage to be in its radical form is a key to an idea of God which transcends both mysticism and the person-to-person encounter."[3] However, it is curious that here where we might expect to find some clue into the nature of God, we are not told anything other than what we already know, namely that courage "shows us the nature of being, it shows that the self-affirmation of being is an affirmation that overcomes negation."[4] Through deeper penetration into the many symbols used to speak about God, Tillich removes them one by one as obstacles to the true God who is "God above God," and in experiencing absolute faith we discover that no religious affirmations about God can be made at all. Absolute faith is "the accepting of the acceptance without somebody

---

[1] Ibid., p. 183.

[2] Ibid., p. 167. Cf. p. 166, 182, in which faith and courage are synonymous with one another, and p. 171, 176, in which faith is considered to be the cause of courage.

[3] Ibid., p. 173.

[4] Ibid.

or something that accepts,"[1] and thus it requires the "God above God" to provide it with the necessary power of being to overcome the radical doubt which it must face. As Tillich describes it:

> It is simply faith, undirected, absolute. It is undefinable, since everything defined is dissolved by doubt and meaninglessness. Nevertheless, even absolute faith is not an eruption of subjective emotions or a mood without objective foundations.[2]

Its objectivity is provided by the power of being by which a person is grasped, which he can directly experience, and which he can then only symbolise after its apprehension.

Tillich does claim to be concerned about the charge that religious symbols or assertions are merely an "illusionary support of or a destructive interference with autonomous morals."[3] Yet it is precisely because he continuously attempts to go behind religious assertions to find their ontological meaning or ground that he seems to beg this question altogether. Religious claims are made to fit a pre-existing scheme in which assertions regarding the actions of God and those regarding man's condition or attitudes are defined in terms of each other. Any significant difference that the one set of assertions

---

[1] Ibid., p. 179. Cf. J. Heywood Thomas, op. cit., p. 66-7, where he analyses the nature of Tillich's discussion of God in CTB and shows the emptiness of Tillich's claims regarding this "God above God."

[2] Ibid., p. 171.

[3] ST III, p. 169.

might make to the other is thus excluded a priori. This can be illustrated by reference to those assertions which the Christian would claim are the most significant in terms of the moral life he is to lead, namely claims about the Incarnation. In the historical existence of the man, Jesus, Tillich finds the presence of the New Being. It is this which man in his estranged and powerless existence has been seeking in order to fulfill the demand placed upon him that he fulfill what he is in essence. The incarnation is thus the necessary, though paradoxical, correlative to man's search for the power of being.

> If there were no personal life in which existential estrangement had been overcome, the New Being would have remained a quest and an expectation and would not be a reality in time and space. Only if the existence is conquered in <u>one</u> point--a personal life, representing existence as a whole--is it conquered in principle, which means "in beginning and in power."[1]

It is therefore the result of the incarnation that an individual is able to overcome the estrangement in his own life and his relationships with others.

Tillich claims that there is an objective and a subjective side to this salvation available in Christ; it is both a divine action and a human response. The action of God means that a new state of being has been created which is to be found in the person of Christ and which is universal in so far as it is a possibility in

---

[1] <u>ST</u> II, p. 113-14.

which any person can participate. The New Being means the presence of power to man, a "healing" power which is able to overcome estrangement in man's existence. In the description of the objective action of God in the bringing of salvation and the atoning activity, however, Tillich understands these actions both in terms of their ontological meaning and in terms of the effects which they have upon human existence. With regard to salvation Tillich claims,

> It corresponds to the state of estrangement as the main characteristic of existence. In this sense, healing means reuniting that which is estranged, giving a centre to what is split, overcoming the split between God and man, man and his world, man and himself.[1]

Likewise with reference to the atonement, Tillich relates language about God's action to language about man's existence by claiming that the former can be understood as the cause of some change of affairs in the latter. Thus:

> The doctrine of atonement is the description of the effect of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ on those who are grasped by it in their state of estrangement. This definition points to the two sides of the process of atonement, to that in the manifestation of the New Being which has an atoning effect and to that which happens to man under the atoning effect.[2]

It is just such a translation of the objective element in the atonement as the creation of an effect which is actualised or made effective "only if man reacts and

---

[1] Ibid., p. 192.

[2] Ibid., p. 197; underlines mine.

accepts the removal of guilt," which is suspicious. As Heywood Thomas suggests,

> . . . it must be emphasised that the doctrine of Atonement is not capable of interpretation as a description of certain psychological processes . . . however the first statement is to be interpreted it must always be a statement about God and so is not a description of a state of affairs capable of exhaustive empirical verification. In so far as the doctrine of Atonement makes reference to God at all it is a description of transcendent actions and so incapable of reduction to any set of statements which contain merely empirical language.[1]

The result of this translation is, however, that Tillich can now move with apparent ease between religious assertions and their ethical implications. What is necessary for the Christian moral life is that union with God be re-established by participation in this New Being and it is this power from which ethical actions will flow. "Only a New Being can produce a new action," Tillich claims, and it is because the right conditions are now produced in man's existence that man can perform effective moral action within the world and in relation to his fellow men. The insight Christians have gained which goes beyond autonomous morality is that we are not to seek our own salvation for this leads to "hard toil and tragic failure."[2] Thus the only religious indicative which is of

---

[1] J. Heywood Thomas, op. cit., p. 109. Cf. C. B. Martin, Tillich's Doctrine of Man (Nisbet, Welwyn, Herts., 1966), p. 178-9. Martin raises a similar issue with regard to the proclamation "Jesus is the Christ." Do we say this because Jesus has transforming power over us as we come to know him and is the meaning of our proclamation that he effects such a change in our existence?

[2] ST II, p. 92.

any consequence to morality is that the New Being which overcomes the existential estrangement all people face but cannot conquer alone is now available in Christ through our participation in the Spiritual Presence. This in itself does not yield any moral imperatives for man's action but presupposes an appraisal of human existence in which value judgements have already been made. What ought to be happening in human life is known by an investigation of man's nature: existential estrangement ought to be overcome; man should be reunited with that from which he is separated; man should become what in essence he really is. Martin has claimed that for this reason the religious indicative becomes fundamentally unnecessary.

> Those uncommitted to the Christian revelation as Tillich defines it might find equal saving power in the contemplation of the life and death of a Socrates, a Rabbi Akiba, or a Mahatma Gandhi--to mention only a few.[1]

Would Tillich be willing to say that the power to fulfill the moral law can be found in other great historical figures and that wherever it is found it has equal validity with that found in Christ?

It would seem that he intends to maintain the uniqueness of Christ and that this is done by finding the ontological meaning of Jesus' words, deeds, and suffering, a meaning which is not to be found in other persons who have spoken, acted, or suffered. Tillich

---

[1] Martin, op. cit., p. 179.

finds three expressions of the New Being in Jesus and offers his understanding of the ethical significance of each expression. The first expression is to be found in the words of Jesus, his preaching and teaching. Some might claim that the significance of Jesus for ethical action is that his teachings can be interpreted as "doctrinal and ethical laws" to which the Christian affirms his obedience. Tillich claims, however, that this is a legalistic interpretation of Jesus, the result of which will be a form of self-salvation in which the Christian is bound to do exactly what Jesus told people to do. We must, however, look not to the content of Jesus' words but rather to their power, a power which they have because he is himself the Word or "the final self-manifestation of God to humanity."[1] The reasoning behind such a claim on Tillich's part is apparently that, since Jesus is himself "more than all the words he has spoken,"[2] any attempt to consider him as simply a religious and moral teacher is to make him into another person. However, it is surely not the case that all those who would take the teachings of Jesus as a source for moral imperatives intend to or actually do separate what he said from who he was, for it is precisely because of his unique person that his words are taken seriously. It is therefore not clear that Tillich's alternative is the

---

[1] ST II, p. 139-140.

[2] Ibid., p. 140; underlines mine. Is this not an empty assertion?

only available one to legalism. According to Tillich, Jesus' words "have the power to create the New Being"; Christians are obedient to those words as they allow themselves to be grasped by this power. In this way Jesus' words are "transformed into reality."[1]

Another view of ethical action in response to Jesus might emphasize the second expression of the New Being, namely Jesus' deeds, and would claim that Christians are called to follow Jesus' example. This interpretation of Christian ethics would centre on the demand to imitate Christ or to make one's life "into a copy of the life of Jesus."[2] Again, Tillich makes his point by placing his opponent in a falsely extreme position and he has bought his victory at the price of insignificance. Imitatio Christi must not contradict the "meaning" of Jesus' traits which is precisely to show that he is the New Being; the only adequate understanding of imitation is, for Tillich, "that we, in our concreteness, are asked to participate in the New Being and to be transformed by it, not beyond, but within, the contingencies of our life."[3] Any form of imitation therefore which becomes "a new law" is likewise inappropriate to Christian ethical action. Finally, the third expression of the New Being, namely Jesus' suffering, also has an

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 141.

[3] Ibid.

ontological meaning. Suffering is necessary if separation is to be overcome and man must participate in the power brought by this suffering in order to be reunited with his essence.

> Only by taking suffering and death upon himself could Jesus be the Christ, because only in this way could he participate completely in existence and conquer every force of estrangement which tried to dissolve his unity with God.[1]

Here Tillich is concerned to argue with those who would separate Jesus' sacrificial death as "the opus supererogatorium which makes it possible for God to overcome the conflict between his love and his wrath."[2] This view does not emphasize what for Tillich is the fundamental significance of Jesus' person of which the necessary consequence is his suffering and death, namely that he is "the appearance of the eternal God-Manhood under the conditions of existence" and as such causes the New Being to be present in power to men.

Tillich's attempt to maintain the uniqueness of Christ and to claim that in his person as the New Being alone is the source of power for the moral life has resulted in making clear precisely those religious convictions which do have a transforming effect upon the whole of his ethic, including its foundation upon

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 142. Tillich is here discussing Anselm.

ontological assertions, and it will be best to close with an analysis of this transformism particularly as it is seen in his work, Love, Power and Justice. As Paul Ramsey suggests in his essay on Tillich, the whole of Tillich's ontological analysis is carried out "within a parenthesis first drawn by Christology."[1] If this is so then there must be at the heart of Tillich's understanding of ethics an indicative which cannot be and is not translated into statements which are by definition true of our existence nor which can be reduced to statements about man himself. Ramsey is not unaware of the difficulties in undertaking such a search for "the Christian concepts he [Tillich] employs have in fact themselves already suffered transformation by the general philosophical insights of a particular school."[2] The monism which Tillich attempts to develop creates serious problems for the Christian understanding of the God and man relationship since, in Tillich's explanation of love as the estranged seeking reunion, one can see "in the shadows the idealistic Absolute going through the undulations of separation or estrangement from itself and then rejoining itself."[3] Yet Ramsey maintains that in at least two respects Tillich's prior understanding of the nature of the divine-human relationship derives

---

[1]Ramsey, op. cit., p. 183.

[2]Ibid., p. 184.

[3]Ibid.

from the biblical understanding and these presuppositions transform his ontological speculations.

The first area in which this can be seen is Tillich's notion of agape which "'cuts into' the other qualities of love to purify and elevate them."[1] The descriptions of justice and power which Tillich offers both point and indeed drive forward towards agape; each description is thus affected by Tillich's conviction that justice and power must, in the end, rely upon the transforming power of love to be fulfilled as justice and power.[2] Ramsey does not wish to claim after this observation that Tillich attempts to deduce ethical imperatives from a general principle of love which is known or believed beforehand. Indeed Tillich himself rejects "the theory that love adds some specific contents to natural justice" or even that love transcends justice "by its additional information about the contents of the moral life."[3] Rather, the transformation which Ramsey has in mind is that in which

> love "gives another dimension" to practical reason or to natural justice, and it is from the determinate meaning and quality of this other "dimension" that there flows the transforming power of love upon justice which produces creative justice, and the radical conversion even of the most dynamic proportional justice and its redirection as an act of self-surrender changing the proportions.[4]

When we look closely at the analysis of creative justice

---

[1] Ibid., p. 186.

[2] Ibid., p. 187.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 191.

which Tillich proposes, for example, it is possible to see that love has affected the nature of that justice. It is love that "recognizes what justice demands", namely listening, giving and forgiving.[1] It is particularly in the qualities of giving and forgiving that love has created a new dimension to justice which is not intrinsic to justice itself, yet is crucial to the fulfillment of that justice. Again with regard to proportional justice, love demands a type of self-surrender not intrinsic to that justice but which love alone requires.[2] Indeed Tillich's description of the different forms of love is also founded upon his conviction that love converts love, "transforming and redirecting it" towards agape or "covenant love."[3] Agape "purifies" or "elevates" the other types of love (eros, philia, libido) so that it is possible for all of them to exist in unity together.[4] Yet, as Ramsey argues, this agape simply cannot be assimilated again "to the general notion of love as an inherent nisus of the soul toward reunion of the separated," for the claim that each individual should become reunited with the unity to which he belongs is already a claim based upon forgiving love expressed by Tillich as the acceptance of the unacceptable.[5] This demand for reunion

---

[1] LPJ, p. 84-6.

[2] Ibid., p. 83.

[3] Ramsey, op. cit., p. 100.

[4] LPJ, p. 116-119.

[5] Ramsey, op. cit., p. 193.

is thus not a "natural" claim upon man but a demand of love-transformed-justice. It is love alone which can require "that this claim be accepted and that he be accepted who is unacceptable in terms of proportional justice."[1]

A similar transformation occurs in Tillich's discussion of morality as a function of the spirit. The moral imperative, Tillich claims, is first known or experienced in "the person-to-person encounter" and it is in this encounter that the unconditional validity of this imperative is recognised.[2] Is this not again a biblical notion of love as personal relation establishing itself right at the heart of morality itself? What before was an unconditionally valid moral imperative experienced as "our essential being over against our state of existential estrangement" now turns out to be in fact the claim of another person "to be a person and to be dealt with as a person."[3] Indeed, that a whole community of persons should be involved in the reunion of the self with its essence is surely the claim made by agape and not the discovery of an ontological analysis. It is with the understanding of love as agape that Tillich can then claim that "life has love in itself as one of its

---

[1] LPJ, p. 86.

[2] ST III, p. 43, 47.

[3] Ibid., p. 43. Cf. our discussion earlier of the moral imperative as described in M&B.

constitutive elements."[1] From this conviction alone can Tillich "lay down as the basic formula of love something which, so far from commanding instant assent, requires his whole philosophy of being for the articulation of its very meaning, namely, 'Being taking Non-Being into itself.'"[2] As love is at the beginning of our awareness of the moral imperative, so it also creates the fulfillment of these demands in the end, for it is the Spirit which "elevates the person into the transcendent unity of the divine life and in so doing it reunites the estranged existence of the person with his essence."[3]

There is another religious conviction with which Tillich analyses the nature of love, power, and justice, however, and this has to do with his eschatological vision of the Kingdom of God. Tillich's understanding of this divine unity in which God and man will be reunited and which will be achieved in the future kingdom has also transformed his analysis of human existence itself. For he affirms that not only are love, power and justice one in the divine ground, "they shall become one in human existence."[4] What has transformed Tillich's understanding of these qualities and attitudes in human existence is his

---

[1] LPJ, p. 26.

[2] Robinson, op. cit., p. 289. The internal quote is from LPJ, p. 49.

[3] ST III, p. 290.

[4] LPJ, p. 108.

understanding of their divine nature which will be made manifest in the holy community.[1] Indeed, the transformation is so complete, Ramsey suggests, that he is moved to wonder "whether what we have here is not actually a phenomenology of the kingdom of God and of his Christ."[2] The future is viewed by Tillich as a time of universal fulfillment in which God's redemptive power will overcome fully the power of non-being. It is fulfillment within this divine and universal fulfillment which constitutes the ultimate claim of justice, a claim which it is the duty of love-transformed-justice (that is, creative justice) to bring about.[3] In fact, God himself is one who deals in creative justice and does not bind himself to proportional justice for the sake of bringing to fulfillment the lives of those who might be excluded according to natural justice.[4] A neutral description of human existence, or even of the structure of reality as a whole, cannot of itself bear this conclusion regarding the future because the natural tendency of the creation, indicated by the notion of natural justice, is freely altered by God himself and by others who exercise this love-transformed-justice. This alteration or transformation, Tillich affirms in hope, will lead to the

---

[1] Ibid., p. 110, 111, 116.

[2] Ramsey, op. cit., p. 186.

[3] LPJ, p. 64-5.

[4] Ibid., p. 66.

fulfillment of human existence, a fulfillment which can now only be "a fragmentary anticipation" of the future, but which is effective now in the loving actions of the spiritual community.[1] Tillich's revision of natural law ethics, which we suggested before, is thus that he identifies "the telos of love, the overcoming of separation, with the telos of the fundamental dynamism of being." It is then possible to claim that "All natural laws can then be subsumed under the law of love."[2] As Robinson has argued, "rigorism, a new naturalism, and something like possession by the divine Spirit all hang together within the texture of Tillich's thought" and form the basis of his ethic of agape, expressed in imperatives to reunite that which is separated.[3]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 124.

[2] Lindbeck, op. cit., p. 89.

[3] Robinson, op. cit., p. 289.

CHAPTER VI

IMPERATIVE ETHICS

It will be instructive at this point to consider the work of Emil Brunner as another example of theoretical Christian ethics. Brunner's approach is interesting in contrast to that of Tillich, not the least because he gives a radically different account of the relationship of Christian morality with natural or autonomous morality. His criticisms of moral philosophy and in particular his attack against Kant have raised a good deal of discussion regarding both the relevance of Christian ethics to philosophical systems and the nature of religious epistemology. It will be useful for us to begin therefore with Brunner's discussion of moral philosophy since it furnishes the background for his own development of the nature of Christian morality. These problems are faced again in the development of his actual position on the nature of Christian ethics, for in the exposition of his "theology of crisis" Brunner makes assertions which are themselves problematic for the philosopher and which make the analysis of ethics in the Christian context even more problematic. As far as possible in analysing Brunner's exposition, we will try to view it from the inside and will use the notion of self-involving language both to come to terms

with his ethic on its own ground and to indicate its possible relevance for the philosophical study of ethics. Finally, a critical evaluation of the logic of decision in Brunner's thought, particularly with reference to the challenge of the naturalistic fallacy, will be appropriate and will make use of some philosophical criticisms of his position.

Brunner begins his analysis of The Divine Imperative by attempting to show the contradictions and limitations involved in establishing an autonomous and completely rational system of ethics.[1] The fundamental contradiction in what Brunner calls "rational ethics" is to be found in the two different views of the relation between "is" and "ought" represented by two major types of ethical theory, naturalism and idealism. Naturalism, Brunner claims, "consists of the more or less logical attempt to explain the moral life from natural facts, or to base 'morality'--that is, the 'right' life--upon such facts."[2] Because this ethic is based upon a concept of the good life, a description of the value to be found in life itself, Brunner also called it eudaimonism.[3] Idealism on the other hand is founded upon a moral law

---

[1]Transl. Olive Wyon (Lutterworth, London, 1942); hereafter abbreviated D. I.

[2]Ibid., p. 36.

[3]Brunner, God and Man: Four Essays on the Nature of Personality, transl. D. Cairns (SCM Press, London, 1936), p. 72-6; hereafter abbreviated G&M.

which is independent of this world or life itself and which appears to man as a "categorical imperative" demanding his obedience. The logical danger of identifying the "ought" of morality with the "is" of natural life or value is thereby avoided by the idealist emphasis on "duty for duty's sake" and by the maintaining of the autonomy of the moral imperative. However, Brunner finds difficulties in both systems of ethics. Naturalism, he claims, "does not give any foundation for a genuine obligation" and idealism cannot "bring its ethical law of reason into touch with the material realities of the world of action."[1] The former system identifies what is with what ought to be with the result that the sense of obligation is lost; the latter separates the two so radically that any relationship between them becomes problematic. Brunner suggests that this contradiction can also be considered as the antithesis of the immanence or transcendence of "ought," an antithesis which again leads rational ethics into unavoidable conflicts and which, for Brunner, can only be surpassed by the Christian ethic. If the "ought" is made completely immanent then essentially no "ought" is left; if it is made transcendent then either man cannot know it or his reason is capable of formulating this "ought" in which case its transcendence is lost.[2]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 73. Cf. D. I., p. 34-52.

[2] D. I., p. 45-7.

Since Brunner judged idealism to be the most hopeful philosophical attempt to create a real alternative to naturalism, though Kant did go too far in his separation of "is" and "ought," and since, in some respects, Brunner sees his own exposition of the Christian ethic as motivated by some of the same concerns, we should examine critically his analysis of the Kantian system.[1] The importance of Kant's formulation of ethics, according to Brunner, is that he unites two of the notions by which the moral good can be determined, namely "the idea" and "law."[2] Kant does attempt to do justice both to the autonomy of the moral good and to man's consciousness of a "thou shalt" directed to his existence. Brunner calls this idealism since the categorical imperative to which man owes obedience is "exactly the same as the Idea of the Good" and in this way both its autonomy and its relation to man are expressed.[3] However, as Brunner will attempt to argue, the contradiction between "is" and "ought," and thereby also the antithesis between an immanent or a transcendent "ought," is deepened to such an extent in Kantian ethics

---

[1] In choosing Kant as his real opponent in the description of ethics, Brunner "shows true discernment." H. D. Lewis, Morals and the New Theology (Victor Gollancz, Ltd., London, 1947), p. 32.

[2] Brunner finds three such concepts in moral philosophy upon which its formulation of morality is founded: value, the idea, and law. Revelation and Reason, transl. Olive Wyon (SCM Press, London, 1947), p. 324; hereafter abbreviated as R&R.

[3] D. I., p. 39.

that no resolution of the difficulty is possible on Kant's own terms. Brunner suggests two major reasons for this. In the first place, Brunner interprets Kant as a dualist in his view of the world and of the self and this is a dualism which is essential to Kant's understanding of autonomy in morals. In the second place, Brunner believes Kant's ethic to be a purely formal one in which no content can be given to the categorical imperative which bears a significant relationship to the form of the law. In both cases, Brunner finds the separation of "is" and "ought" so radical that another formulation of ethics altogether is necessary; it is this which Brunner will offer in his account of Christian ethics.

Brunner claims to find dualism in the Kantian ethic, particularly as a result of Kant's arguments for the autonomy of morality, and he is concerned to indicate his disagreement with the fundamental presuppositions under which this autonomy is developed. H. D. Lewis has suggested three such arguments for autonomy in Kant. The first argument is Kant's attempt to establish the autonomy of the moral law itself.

> [It] is not to be derived in any way from a natural impulse or tendency . . . Nor is the content of obligation to be derived from an analysis of any particular reaction of our own.[1]

---

[1]Lewis, op. cit., p. 33. This is a claim of Kant's which Lewis agrees with, finding that it "can be identified, in essentials, with the claim we have made for ethical objectivity."

Brunner recognises this as a legitimate attempt to base morality in that which transcends the natural and is therefore independent of man's inclinations or wishes, but what is necessary in order to support such a notion of autonomy is the development of the autonomy of man's practical reason as well. It is this reason which can discover the a priori moral law to which one is then obligated and from which imperatives are derived. With accepting a transcendent source of the moral imperative, Brunner is in essential agreement; however, he could not accept that man himself was capable of discovering it by the use of his own rational faculties. To claim this would, according to Brunner's definition of the antithesis common to rational ethics, be to hold that the moral law is indeed immanent in relation to man and it is just here that Brunner claims not to be able to understand Kant's intention. For, in attempting to transcend naturalism, Kant has yet presupposed "a point of identity between divine and human knowledge in reason, without which transcendentalism breaks down, and with which faith in God and in Revelation cannot be combined."[1]

Secondly, Kant argues that morality must be autonomous with regard to motivation for it is a matter of doing one's "duty for duty's sake." Thus, as Lewis suggests, Kant holds "that duty must be freely fulfilled, it must be accepted because of its obligatory character and, therefore, independently of any natural urge to act

---

[1] D. I., p. 46.

as it requires."[1] In his description of the idealist position, Brunner offers his interpretation of this principle.

> An act is not good if I do it because I like doing it, but only if I do it because I ought to do it, because I "may" not do otherwise. Thus the principle of the Good can never be sought in my own impulses but only in the law which confronts me.[2]

It is at this point Brunner claims the dualistic view of the self emerges since the "fundamental antithesis . . . between that which is and that which ought to be" is internalised and man is split into two selves.

> The intelligible Self is then the Legislator of the Good . . . the empirical Self becomes a sense-bound creature, without freedom, the intelligible Self becomes a God.[3]

Brunner rejects such dualism on the grounds that man's "intelligible Self" is not in fact capable of being a "Lawgiver" to man, for indeed "the Self which is conscious of responsibility and can have a 'sense of guilt' does not exist."[4] The self which directs one towards the moral law is the self which is characterised by freedom and which alone can be aware of and impose a duty upon the moral agent. This is the third sense in which Kant

---

[1] Lewis, op. cit., p. 34.

[2] D. I., p. 38.

[3] Ibid., p. 46. Cf. Lewis, op. cit., p. 34. "The pure self is conceived in such a way that it invariably directs itself to what is obligatory, and the empirical self follows the course of natural desires."

[4] Ibid.

supported the autonomy of morals for "an agent cannot have a duty without being aware of that duty." Thus

> I cannot be under any obligation to do what I do not perceive to be my duty if the ability to discharge a duty is essential to its being a duty. Duty must therefore be "self-imposed" in the sense that I accept or recognize it.[1]

Since Brunner has rejected already the notion of a legislative self, it is clear that he could not accept this notion of the self-imposition of morality, nor does he accept the principle upon which it is based, namely "I ought, therefore I can." It is clear that Brunner is prepared to draw the most radical consequences from Kant's interpretation of autonomy for he finds this dualism dangerous and unavoidable. He claims,

> if we take the principle of autonomy, and the identity of the Law-giver and the Self seriously, then the inmost part of the will is indeed not only in harmony with, but is identical with the Divine Will, thus evil can only be due to the non-intelligible, empirical, and causally-determined Self; thus it is not really an evil will but merely a hindrance.[2]

One senses here that the real crux of Brunner's disagreement with rational ethics is beginning to show itself in this hint that idealism is "incapable of knowing evil in its depths."[3] It is only when the gap between "is" and "ought" is no longer internalised in man himself, as

---

[1] Lewis, op. cit., p. 35.

[2] D. I., p. 47.

[3] R&R, p. 327-30.

Brunner will argue in his description of Christian ethics, that the real seriousness of evil can be confronted and overcome.

Brunner's second major criticism of Kant has to do with the formalism of the moral law since it does not support any relation between its obligatoriness and the nature of things in themselves. Since morality must be freed from the interference of any particular set of natural desires or inclinations, the result is that what matters in morality is not what the moral agent does but only how he does it. The goodness of one's actions is recognised not only by the content of the actions themselves but by whether or not they conform to the law one has placed upon oneself. In Brunner's eyes this becomes legalism, for

> It is not the content of the will which makes it good or bad--the same action can at one time be good and at another time be bad--but the "form" of the will, that is, its harmony with the law.[1]

For Brunner the value of formalism in allowing the moral law to be transcendent and even to be universally applicable cannot outweigh the problem of defining the contents of this moral law which surely must be given with some reference to statements about the nature of God, man or the world. Brunner claims that Kant would be unwilling to do this.

---

[1] D. I., p. 39.

> The difficulty is due to the fact that the Kantian philosophy offers no link between the world of existence--and, indeed, the concrete world, as it now is--and that which ought to be. The imperative "Thou shalt" is a stranger in this world, it has nothing to do with things as they actually are.[1]

Indeed since Brunner interprets Kant as both a dualist and a formalist, he can see only two ways in which Kant might give the moral law content, both of which would be unacceptable to Kant and to himself. One possibility would be for Kant to determine the content of moral imperatives according to that which denies or subdues one's inclinations and in this way the moral law would be relevant to man's actual situation. This, however, would reduce the Kantian ethic to "an ascetic ethic of absolute renunciation of the world" and it is not clear at all that Kant could agree to such an ethic.[2] Another possibility would be to determine the content of imperatives by reference to an ethic of culture or an ethic of values in which case Kant would have to relinquish the autonomy of morality in favour of a freely chosen heteronomy. Either alternative would both weaken the separation of "is" and "ought" and corrupt the notion of "duty for duty's sake" both of which Brunner wishes to retain for the development of his interpretation of the Christian ethic.[3]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 48.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Brunner claims in addition that when Kant did come to terms with the material content of his ethic,

In his book, The Categorical Imperative, H. J. Paton discusses the nature of autonomy and of formalism in the Kantian ethic and comes to very different conclusions regarding these notions than Brunner.[1] The first two meanings of autonomy for which Brunner criticises Kant, for example, are discussed by Paton in a section entitled "Misunderstandings," and it is clear that he intends to argue how far removed the implications which Brunner draws are from Kant's own understanding. Paton interprets Kant as saying that natural inclination is not by itself a sufficient motive of moral action, particularly if that action is to be considered good. He did not mean by this that inclination could not motivate a good action at all, but merely that the motive of duty provided by practical reason must be present at the same time.[2] According to Paton, Kant avoids naturalism not because he held that inclination could not motivate or determine a moral action, but because that inclination could not by itself determine what one's duty was.[3] Thus what is is not the source of what ought to be. One's

---

his notion of duty was perverted and became "desire or inclination somewhat glorified." In attempting to give concrete imperatives to the formal maxim, Kant risks naturalism and thereby weakens the is-ought antithesis. Ibid., p. 49.

[1] H. J. Paton, The Categorical Imperative: A Study in Kant's Moral Philosophy (Hutchinson's University Library, London, 1946).

[2] Ibid., p. 48-9.

[3] Ibid., p. 49.

inclination is indeed an irrelevant ground for deciding both what one's duty is and that it ought to be obeyed, but this does not necessarily imply that a moral judgement is being rendered against inclinations as such. For, as Paton goes on to demonstrate, "moral action is compatible with the presence of inclination" since maxims themselves arise as a result of "the cooperation of reason and inclination."[1] It is one of the functions of the practical reason to transform an inclination or an interest into an action by the creation of a maxim which will guide this action.[2] Thus, not only are actions often suggested to us by our inclinations, our inclinations themselves could not result in actions without the use of the practical reason.[3] To say therefore that actions resulting from reason are good, while those resulting from inclination are bad is to make the matter deceptively simple and a good deal less complex than Kant's own writings justify.

Paton therefore also opposes the conclusion which Brunner accepts as a logical consequence of his interpretation of autonomy, namely the charge of dualism. Paton argues that freedom is not necessarily the quality belonging to one of man's selves, the rational one which is capable of moral action, and that determination by natural necessity does not belong exclusively to man's

---

[1] Ibid., p. 56.

[2] Ibid., p. 83.

[3] Ibid., p. 83, 49.

lesser self. The view that "moral action is wholly free and all other action wholly determined" is simply "absurd" and cannot be justly attributed to Kant.[1] Lewis interprets this distinction between the "pure" and the "empirical" self as Kant's attempt "to fit into his system . . . the conviction which he considered, and I think very rightly considered, to be axiomatic in moral thinking--namely, that the idea of obligation involves the freedom of choice."[2] What does need to be maintained from Kant's argument for the autonomous practical reason is that man is faced with the possibility of choosing either inclination or duty and of being obedient to either, though one does not need to emphasise quite so radically the conflict between inclination and duty.[3] Indeed, to read Kant as a radical dualist seems to exclude the possibility that there could be a significant conflict between the two selves at all, a conflict which is at least partially necessary for the notion of duty to be meaningful at all.[4] If there is such a gap between the selves, it is difficult to see how desires could either hinder or help moral action, or indeed how one's reason could affect or control one's inclinations.[5] The real issue therefore is

---

[1] Ibid., p. 215.

[2] Lewis, op. cit., p. 35.

[3] Ibid., p. 34.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Paton, op. cit., p. 254.

whether the laws of freedom, manifest in the exercise of man's practical reason, and the laws of necessity, manifest in man's natural inclinations, can be meaningfully combined in man himself, and it is for just such an issue that a solution can be found within Kant. Each of these notions regarding freedom and necessity represents a point of view with regard to man; that is, man can be regarded as "a thing as it is in itself" in which case he considers himself to be "independent of the laws to which the same thing is subject as an appearance or as belonging to the sensible world."[1] Freedom and necessity become therefore two ways of viewing the whole man and are not qualities which adhere to one aspect of man or another, and when considered from the point of view of freedom, the whole person is subject to and can act responsibly under the demands of the moral law. With this notion, therefore, "the supposed contradiction disappears."[2]

Likewise the charge of formalism against Kant, Paton argues, does not really touch on a significant issue in his formulation of ethics for it was precisely Kant's intention to explain the form of morality and not to "moralize."[3] Natural desires, human goals, or personal

---

[1] Ibid., p. 266-7. That Kant involves himself in further difficulties by attempting to formulate a metaphysic in which this "double standpoint" plays an essential role need not concern us here, for, as Paton says, "Kant's ethics . . . is not based on his metaphysics: it would be truer to say that his metaphysics . . . is based primarily on his ethics." Ibid., p. 255.

[2] Ibid., p. 267.

[3] Ibid., p. 74-5.

values are not irrelevant in the making of actual moral decisions though they may be irrelevant in the formulation of our duty and thus giving content to the categorical imperative is not particularly problematic. As Paton explains:

> A man who is guided by the formal maxim of morality must not be conceived as acting in a vacuum. In the light of this maxim he selects and controls his ordinary maxims of self-love and inclination.[1]

Kant is therefore, on this interpretation, not one who has forgotten that "moral action has a matter as well as a form, an empirical as well as an a priori element, and an object as well as a supreme principle," but rather one who "does not forget. He expects his readers to remember."[2] Kant does not suppose that our practical moral problems can be solved by consulting the categorical imperative alone, for this in itself yields no specific demands.

> Kant at once makes it clear that there is no question--as is sometimes supposed--of deducing particular duties merely from the empty form of universal law. On the contrary, we have to consider the matter which has to be fitted into this empty form. The matter consists of our ordinary material maxims based on inclination for definite objects; and what we have to do is to accept or reject these maxims by the principle of universality.[3]

It is just this application of the supreme principle which Kant demonstrates in his Metaphysic of Morals for the form of this principle alone cannot entail particular imperatives of action. To accuse Kant, as Brunner does, of being

---

[1] Ibid., p. 77.

[2] Ibid., p. 75.

[3] Ibid., p. 73.

able to fill this formal principle only with ascetic requirements or the demands of an alien source is thus not altogether justified.[1]

Another important criticism of Brunner's argument against rational ethics or natural morality has been brought forth by N. H. G. Robinson who claims that Brunner's entire argument must be viewed in the light of his belief in the inherent sinfulness of natural man. It is this conviction on Brunner's part which colours the whole of his argument with naturalism and idealism and turns it logically into an argument ad hominem.[2] As Brunner himself suggests philosophical ethics "aims to complete the process of natural moral clarification" and is in this sense a function of man's pride. Thus,

> it is the attempt to base morality upon the human reason itself, without the additional aid of irrational-religious and irrational-conventional sanctions. Philosophical ethics . . . is at the same time a rational ethic, the erection of a standard for the will and for conduct which can be established in accordance with reason . . . A philosophical ethic is not necessarily an irreligious ethic; but its distinguishing feature is the fact that it always categorically rejects the basis of a transcendent revelation; in this sense it is always "an immanental idea."[3]

---

[1] Cf. D. M. MacKinnon, A Study in Ethical Theory (A. & C. Black, London, 1957), p. 115-16. Sure for Kant "the notion of goodness takes precedence over that of duty; if moral goodness is the fundamental form of goodness, that very language bears witness to the precedence of the notions of goodness and value over those of duty and obligation." Thus in the charge that Kant's ethic is "negative" there is less truth or insight than invective.

[2] N. H. G. Robinson, The Groundwork of Christian Ethics, p. 46.

[3] D. I., p. 35.

It would seem therefore that the very antitheses which Brunner claims to be so problematic in philosophical ethics are themselves the result of man's attempt to impose a moral standard upon himself without any appeal to a transcendent source of the moral law. Rational ethics "has arisen out of the need to give greater security to ethical thought than it possesses in its popular form," but since it relies on reason alone, it cannot resolve its inherent contradictions.[1] Thus,

> in reality the ethical inquiry is sustained by a deep-seated and hidden motive which seeks for self-dependent and self-sufficient reason, morality, man, a greater security than otherwise they possess.[2]

The result is, in terms of Brunner's thought, that even though he is prepared to admit that the starting point of ethics is the "simple experience of moral responsibility" common to all men, an experience which gives rise to questions concerning the Good, nevertheless what is essential to morality is the notion of "command."[3] Any rational formulation of morality fails to come to terms with this notion, and it is a failure to admit a transcendent beyond man's reason, and thus is incapable of defining

---

[1] Ibid., p. 44.

[2] Robinson, op. cit., p. 46.

[3] D. I., p. 45, 52. Cf. his analysis of the "moral rational perception" of man in R&R, p. 321f.

a "pure" morality which "assumes the form of a command."[1] A theonomous ethic alone can resolve the contradictions of rational autonomous ethics and indeed this latter enterprise must be abandoned altogether in so far as it seeks to establish man's authority over against God's.

> The rationalism of the philosophical ethic can never be combined with the recognition of a divine self-revelation . . . Autonomy and theonomy cannot be combined.[2]

It is in coming to terms with the revelation of God that morality can come to understand itself and it is when morality is founded upon God's commands that it becomes "pure" and the separation of the "is" and the "ought" is maintained.

God's revelation of Himself and of His will to man is for Brunner the only foundation upon which a moral ought can be based and the only source of moral imperatives which will inspire ethical obedience. It is this revelation which provides

> an answer in which the conflict between the empty but pure form of the command and its concrete but impure ethical content is ended; an answer in which good and evil are clearly distinguished from one another, without merging again into one at an innermost point; in which the opposition between good and evil comes out as clearly as possible, yet without rending humanity into two separate metaphysical halves . . .[3]

The Christian ethic based upon such a revelation can offer a transcendent source of good which is relevant to human

---

[1] R&R, p. 324.

[2] D. I., p. 46.

[3] Ibid., p. 51.

life and which does not force the antithesis of "is" and "ought" into man himself, nor set it between nature and man's reason. What becomes clear in Brunner's thought is that for him the more fundamental antithesis in morality is that between holiness and sin; it is sin which characterises the whole of creation and which is the root of the inadequacy of rational ethics to offer a non-natural, and that means a non-sinful, formulation of the good. The good can only be known to us by the revelation of God in which the transcendent and holy "ought" is shown to be God's will itself.

> What God does and wills is good; all that opposes the will of God is bad. The Good has its basis and its existence solely in the will of God . . . God is not merely the guardian of the Moral Law and of the moral ordinances, but their Creator.[1]

Since "the Good is based solely on God's transcendent revelation," it is not possible, Brunner claims, for man to discover it within the natural world or from his own sense of obligation. God reveals himself as the reality of the highest value whose will is good and man judges goodness in the world by this norm.

Correspondingly, the content of Christian ethics is formulated by God's commands and moral action is characterised by obedience to God's will. Here the essence of "pure" morality is realised, that is when human goodness is seen as a function of Good itself, namely the will of God. Thus, "there is no Good save

---

[1] Ibid., p. 53.

obedient behaviour, save the obedient will . . . The Good consists in always doing what God wills at any particular moment."[1] Brunner suggests that as a result of the centrality of obedience in the Christian ethic, this ethic is basically situational. God's will cannot be formulated in advance of a situation of decision and can never be stated in terms of general moral principles to guide one's choices and actions. This again constitutes one of the distinctive features of the Christian morality as opposed to philosophical ethics, since "the Christian conception of the Good differs from every other conception of the Good at this very point: that it cannot be defined in terms of principle at all."[2] Ethical action is thus conceived as no longer a matter of deducing imperatives from general principles of action but rather of being open to and ready to act upon the will of God in every moment.

> The scientific presentation of the Christian ethic can certainly never represent the Good as a general truth, easy to be perceived, and based on a universal principle . . . its task is to work out scientifically the characteristic element in the Christian knowledge of the Good, namely that the Good, as faith knows it, can never be legalistic, or a matter of abstract principle . . .[3]

The transcendence of God's will is thus protected due to the impossibility of formulating any rationally acceptable

---

[1] Ibid., p. 83.

[2] Ibid., p. 82.

[3] Ibid., p. 89.

or universalisable principles, even a principle of agape.[1] This situationalism of Brunner's understanding of ethical decision is also expressed in his characterisation of Christian action as determined by the action of God, as being performed within the activity of God.

> The Good is that which God does; the goodness of man can be no other than letting himself be placed within the activity of God. This is what "believing" means in the New Testament. And this faith is the principle of ethics.[2]

Christian morality is not only set in the sphere of God's action but is also dependent upon God's active presence for its power and efficacy. Thus, "Human conduct can only be considered 'good' when, and in so far as, God Himself acts in it, through the Holy Spirit."[3]

Two issues seem here to be crucial to Brunner's understanding of ethical decision and a closer examination

---

[1] "The Good is simply what God wills that we should do, not that which we would do on the basis of a principle of love." Ibid., p. 117. This type of analysis in which Christian decision is interpreted as a matter of obedience to the principle of love is given in Joseph Fletcher's Situation Ethics. Although he too is concerned to avoid legalism as a slavish obedience to laws and to affirm the nature of Christian ethics as situational, one cannot escape the intellectualism in his understanding of this love. Indeed Fletcher concedes the rationality of his analysis of ethics by giving us a formula or calculus for determining our actions according to an ideal of love inspired by God's revelation of himself in Jesus (see particularly pages 95-99). This seems to be precisely the kind of rational confinement of God's will which Brunner would consider undermining to the essence of Christian decision as pure openness to whatever God wills. (Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1966).

[2] Ibid., p. 55.

[3] Ibid., p. 84.

of them will serve to clarify the nature of decision-making. The first problem which arises has to do with the relationship between statements about the nature of God known by his revelation of himself and those about human moral agents. What is the logic of this relationship in Brunner's thought? Secondly, a problem related to this first one has to do with the nature of one's acceptance of religious claims such that ethical decision and action are bound up with them. What is the nature of the relationship between the two aspects of the Christian life as Brunner interprets it: belief and action? Since Brunner is unwilling to define the will of God in any terms which man could discover independently of revelation and since the content of that will cannot, by definition, be identical with the demands of man's essential nature, it remains to be seen what relationship this will of God can have to human life and decision.

Of central importance to Brunner's exposition of the Christian ethic is his understanding of the nature of faith which alone can recognise the demands made by God upon human life and can complete the relationship of fellowship with God which is the ground of the Christian moral life. Faith for Brunner is an outlook adopted by one who believes and is constituted by a judgement regarding God's revelation of himself in Christ and a commitment to give oneself in obedience to the way of life so offered by that action. Faith is "obedience-in-trust" and expresses most fully "the dependence of the human act

upon a foregoing divine act."[1] It is this faith which characterises the Christian ethical life as continual openness to the will of God in every decision and which is

> the personal answer of self-giving to the Word of God. In this response of self-giving the divine self-communication first reaches its goal, and actual fellowship between God and man originates.[2]

Thus Brunner can speak of faith as both "assent" and "resolve" for,

> In pistis is contained the personal acknowledgement of the Lord as Lord, obedience, and the personal acceptance of the divine self-giving love in grateful, responding love.[3]

As assent, faith involves the recognition both of God's revelation in the person and action of Jesus Christ and of the character of the encounter between God and man which was enacted in him. As resolve, faith means the commitment of one's behaviour and intentions to actions which are appropriate to that encounter and which fulfill the relationship God offers to man.

For Brunner, therefore, the centre of the Christian life is to be found in the revelatory and reconciling action of God in Christ. Since "we know God's will only through His revelation, in His own Word,"[4] and since "Jesus Christ Himself is the Word,"[5] it is that

---

[1] Brunner, The Divine-Human Encounter, transl. Amandus W. Loos (SCM Press, London, 1944), p. 49; hereafter abbreviated as D-HE.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] D. I., p. 114.

[5] D-HE, p. 77.

event which becomes the foundation of the new morality. In the life of Christ, Brunner claims, God was performing an action of reconciling man to himself both by disclosing his nature and his intention to man and by giving of himself in a deeply personal encounter with his creatures. Christ's life is an event

> in which God confronts the human "I" as "Thou," in which man does not dispose of the divine truth, but receives it in an act of self-communication on the part of God and in which this act of communication is not the same as the deepest act of self-reflection but an event, in which from beyond human possibilities God Himself discloses Himself to man.[1]

Brunner's intention in The Divine-Human Encounter was to argue that the revelation cannot be contained in the form of doctrines, historical truths, or truths of reason precisely because he considered it to be a deeply personal action on the part of God himself. Any doctrinal or historical statements are derived from or express the fundamental revelation which is the opening up of a new relationship between God and man.

> The self-revelation of God is no object, but wholly the doing and self-giving of a subject --or, better expressed, a Person. A Person who is revealing Himself, a Person who demands and offers Lordship and fellowship with Himself, is the most radical antithesis to everything that could be called object or objective.[2]

Because of this personal character of revelation, it does not come in the form of pronouncements which man is to accept or reject. Pittenger has taken this view in his

---

[1] D. I., p. 50. [2] D-HE, p. 53.

criticism of Brunner's christology. He interprets the Christ-event in Brunner as an act in which God speaks only of himself and Christian faith as a "one-sided conversation piece" in which God announces his salvation in a great "either-or" and commands a decision to be made, either acceptance or rejection of what God says.[1] Such an interpretation of Brunner emphasises the character of faith as assent but cannot do justice to the resolve by which a believer commits himself to a new relationship with God.

This resolve is a function of one's willingness to see in the Christ-event an act of reconciliation in which God himself is involved in his Word.

> That God in His Word does not speak "something" but Himself also changes the way of "speaking." God Himself speaks to myself: that is to say, His speaking is address. Previously we expressed it in this way: God delivers to us no course of lectures in dogmatic theology; He submits and explains to us no confession of faith. He does say to me, "I am the Lord thy God." His Word is claim and promise, gift and demand. Likewise "knowing" also acquires a new meaning. No longer is it a question of the insertion of something into the knowledge I possess, the expansion of the intellectual riches at my disposal; but it is answering

---

[1] Norman Pittenger, The Word Incarnate: A Study of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ (Nisbet & Co., London, 1959), p. 136. Lewis understands this aspect of Brunner's thought for he points out that the work of Christ is "the culmination of God's self-communication in 'saving history'--not to be confused with a mere progressive initiation into correct ideas about God, for the prophetic 'word' is at the same time an 'act,' . . . God, in His revelation gives us, not 'a word from God' but 'God himself,' the 'Person who speaks' and the 'content of his teaching' being one." Lewis, Morals and Revelation, The Muirhead Library of Philosophy (Allen and Unwin, London, 1951), p. 37.

> personally when personally addressed, and hence obedient, thankful confession and prayer.[1]

This communication between God and man in the form of God's address is God's drawing near to man in love and it involves both God and his creatures in a relation of "personal correspondence" in which a loving relationship can be fulfilled. Thus Brunner interprets the revelation not merely as the gaining of new knowledge about God. He does claim that "God reveals His own Nature" and "God reveals His will" but this is not meant in the sense of content alone. God reveals Himself "where He gives Himself."[2] It is as a response to this self-giving that God demands obedience to his will for human life; it is faith which responds by inward assent to God's action and by resolve to be reconciled to God.

From the perspective of God's drawing near to man in Christ, Brunner considers two biblical action-pictures of primary importance in describing the divine and human relationship and in indicating the moral responsibility of the Christian. The first is the action of creation in which God makes himself known as Lord, appoints man as the creature responsible to him, judges his creation to be good, and promises continuing providence and care for it. This entire creative action is taken as a self-

---

[1]Brunner, D-HE, p. 62. This is also the meaning of Brunner's claim that "Faith does not depend on 'something true'--even though this truth were something spoken by God--but has to do with God Himself, how He reveals Himself to us in His Word, is present with us, addresses us, and furthers in us the response of obedience-in-trust." Ibid., p. 76.

[2]D. I., p. 115.

disclosure of God's claim to be acknowledged as Lord, a claim which is to be recognised in the various actions of revealing, appointing, judging, promising, and evaluating. It is the religious claim "This world is God's creation" which considers the natural world to be evidence of God's Lordship and an expression of his omnipotence and supremacy.

> As Creator God is our absolute Lord and the Lord of all existence. In Him alone the existence of the world, and the manner in which it exists, is based. This world, as it is--in spite of everything--is God's world. It is this world which He wills, His creation.[1]

For Brunner, this claim means that "God's will controls absolutely everything" and the world not only belongs to but is totally dependent upon God himself.[2] This understanding of the created world is constituted by a judgement as to the character of creation and a commitment to a way of living in which that character is actualised. The Christian can be described therefore as one who "looks on Creation as an action which has various performative forces and which is correlated with various performative replies."[3] One polarity of Christian decision-making thus centres on the action and response pattern of the creation.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 123.

[2] Ibid., p. 119.

[3] Evans, The Logic of Self-Involvement, p. 160.

God's claim to Lordship involves first of all his right to all that he has made and his calling of man in particular to play a special role within that handiwork. Creation has thus an exercitive element for in the action of making man God qualifies man's existence by its dependence upon him and by his claim to man as a personal correspondent. Thus Brunner can say that "man is only man in virtue of the claim made on him by God."[1] Man's creation is an act of appointment in which his existence and its meaning are united.

> Man alone has an "I", or, rather, is a Self, but this Self is not itself ultimate reality; it is not based upon itself, it does not possess aseity, but I am "I" only because, and in so far as, God addresses me as "thou"; therefore the distinctive quality of my existence, responsibility, only consists in the fact that I am addressed by God.[2]

God's intention with regard to human life is thus made clear by his exercise of authority and power in causing that life to exist. This creation is also evaluated by God as being good and is characterised by this verdictive element as well. Value is given to what God has made, value which can be recognised by man, not independently of God, but only as his Lordship is acknowledged. The goodness of creation is thus a function of God's having judged it to be so and this means that its goodness will not be seen unless God also is seen. God also acts in

---

[1] D. I., p. 66.

[2] Ibid., p. 153. Cf. D-HE, p. 37.

the creation by promising his guidance and care for what he has made and, in so doing, he reveals his intention for the future relationship between himself and the world. God as Creator is thus one who "guarantees to maintain and preserve what He creates," and it is this task which is performed by the "orders" of creation.[1] The orders are the means by which God holds back "the irruption of the forces of chaos" and protects the world from destruction.

> Primarily these orders are only of any practical use when they really do create and maintain order, however primitive or unjust this ordering may be. Human life cannot exist without such orders. Therefore, even though only in an indirect fragmentary way, they are the Will of God, they are His gift.[2]

These orders are then to be understood as a sign of the promise of God and as the means by which he fulfills his intention to ensure the preservation of creation.

Moral action at this polarity of the Christian ethic is a matter of responding to the action of God, his exercise of authority, his evaluation, and his commitment. The first responsibility of the Christian is to recognise in the creation this three-fold action of God and to resolve that the only way of life worthy of one's commitment is one which appropriates these actions into moral decisions and actions. Recognising God's claim on human life means in the first place looking upon that life as

---

[1] Ibid., p. 224. [2] Ibid., p. 221.

one of creaturely dependence and renouncing any independence from the Giver of life. This attitude to life is the one which will allow man to find his true self in response to God's address and in which he becomes that for which God has created him.[1]

> Similarly men are also considered as those who are not something in and for themselves, but only as those who from the first are placed in a specific relation to God and then also place themselves in such a relation: either positive or negative, obedient or disobedient, true or false, comformable to God or impious. They too are always considered as those who act: and the action, whether expressing sin or faith, is always understood as action in relation to God.[2]

To recognise God's claim on life is to see that one's whole life ought to be lived in relationship with God and that whatever a person does ought to be done in the context of such a relationship. Brunner interpreted this to be a life of obedience and of service in response to the call of God so that the Christian commits himself in faith "to do that which honours God and makes His will effective."[3] Continual openness to God's commands and willingness to serve his intention therefore characterise Christian decision in response to the claim of the Creator.

Moral action must also be characterised by the acceptance of God's verdict upon the creation and by

---

[1] Ibid., p. 78.

[2] D-HE, p. 32.

[3] D. I., p. 188.

sharing the intention of God in preserving the creation through the natural "orders." Accepting this verdict means recognising "the existing reality as the sphere in which the Good is to be realized; that is, this actual reality defines for us our course of action."[1] The Schöpfungsordnung therefore have a positive role to play in Christian ethical decision both because they are the necessary sphere of moral action and because they are God's means of working within the creation. Not only does he use them to prevent the destruction of his work; they are also the "means by which the divine wisdom compels men to live in community."[2] In this sense, the orders do define to a certain extent what the Christian is to do for, no matter how imperfect they are, obedience to God's will implies obedience to these orders. The difficulty in Brunner's interpretation here is in determining to what extent such obedience to the orders really is a matter of doing the will of God and to what extent it is obedience for the sake of these orders themselves. On the one hand, Brunner does claim that the will of God can be obeyed by fulfilling the requirements of one's station and role in society, that, indeed, the first duty of the Christian is a conservative one, namely "to recognize and adjust ourselves to the orders He has created."[3] Thus the natural order furnishes the bare minimum

---

[1] Ibid., p. 291.

[2] Ibid., p. 210.

[3] Ibid., p. 208.

requirements of Christian life and only thus far is it indicative of the will of God.[1]

> Reverence for the Creator, whose work, in spite of all human perversion, is the one existing reality, demands as our first reaction obedience to the existing order, and grateful acceptance of the goodness of the Creator in the orders, through which alone He makes it possible for us to serve our neighbour, and indeed, to live at all.[2]

The orders therefore are a means for obeying the will of God for fellowship among men, fellowship which would be destroyed, as would life itself, by the loss of these orders. The purpose of God's creative work is thus fulfilled by doing what these orders require and can furnish us with useful knowledge as to the content of God's will for human life.

Robinson argues that this emphasis on the created orders reveals a characteristic flaw in Brunner's ethic, for

> [his] ethical thought was pervaded by the naturalistic fallacy, the error of deriving "ought" from "is," the moral from the natural, the mistake of subordinating the former to the latter instead of affirming its supremacy as the true supernatural.[3]

---

[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Concept of 'Order of Creation' in Emil Brunner's Social Ethic," in The Theology of Emil Brunner, ed. Chas. W. Kegley, The Library of Living Theology, Vol. 3 (Macmillan, New York, 1962), p. 266-7.

[2]D. I., p. 214.

[3]Robinson, op. cit., p. 234.

He cites as an example of this fallacy Brunner's attempt to derive an "ideal of marriage as a lifelong relationship between one man and one woman from the bare natural facts that every child is the offspring of one man and one woman." Brunner's interest in such an order as marriage stems, Robinson argues, not from its moral character nor from its being commanded by God, but from the fact that it is natural to human life.[1] It seems that for Brunner, however, this natural fact takes on moral significance as a person comes to see in the natural world the action and involvement of God so that "marriage is not a natural occurrence, but a moral act based upon the foundation of a natural occurrence."[2] To see in this natural fact an action of deeper significance is to adopt an onlook which appropriates God's judgement upon and promise to his creation and by which one therefore can make decisions that will fulfill the intention of God himself.

The second action-picture which constitutes the other polarity of Christian ethical decision and action

---

[1]The point Robinson intends to make by the use of this example will be brought out more clearly in our critique of Brunner's ethic. Robinson does claim that for Brunner the guidance provided by the orders "does not contain any ethical sentiment but has rather 'a more technical function: that of giving the right direction.' Time and again Brunner described the orders as providing no more than a framework for the Christian life and as 'based upon a standard of law which is totally different from that which is known by faith.'" These references show Brunner at his most dualistic. Ibid., p. 196-7. See D. I., p. 150, 335.

[2]Brunner, D. I., p. 357. Cf. Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 266.

is that of God's redemptive activity. "As Creator He is the beginning and the ground of all existence, the source of all life; as Redeemer He is the End, the Goal, towards which all existence tends."[1] The end towards which God will bring his creation is characterised by the fulfillment of the relationship which God originally intended and Brunner claims that it is God alone who can fulfill his own will. Although "it is His will that God wills to accomplish in the world" and although "He is not the servant of some purpose outside Himself," yet "in His love . . . He sets up an End outside Himself without ceasing to be His own End."[2] Brunner describes this end as

> the communion of the creature with Himself, the Creator. This Divine will for "community" is God's Sovereign Will. Therefore salvation, beatitude, the fulfillment of the purpose of life, both for humanity as a whole, and for the individual, is included in God's royal purpose.[3]

For Brunner, this desire of God to fulfill a relationship with man in which both God and man can be true to themselves is an expression of God's love for his creation, a love which can overcome the resistance of man's self-will expressed in sin and which will last when even faith and hope have vanished.[4] The redemptive action of God is thus his self-involvement in the history of the natural world to bring his creation towards the goal for which

---

[1] Ibid., p. 122.

[2] Ibid., p. 119.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 164.

it was created, namely the establishment of a loving community under his kingship.

The orders of creation can then be seen in the context of the purpose for which God is preserving this world from destruction.

> For He wills to lead the Creation out beyond itself, into the perfecting of all things. God does not preserve the world simply in order to preserve it, but in order that He may perfect it. Therefore His affirmation of the existing order is only conditional--namely, it is conditioned by this aim, it is the affirmation of a transitional state.[1]

The orders do not represent any form of traditional natural law precisely because they are transformed by God's purpose for them and are allowed to exist only in so far as they compel man to live in community.[2] The goal for which they were created is thus implicit in their existence and they are to be obeyed for this reason only. The orders, seen from the perspective of God's redeeming activity, do not require acts of love which Brunner understands according to the model of personal I-Thou relationship, and thus do not require decisions which follow the logic of love or of faith.[3] They allow

---

[1] Ibid., p. 214.

[2] Cf. Ramsey, Nine Modern Moralists, p. 202. These "orders" are described in a somewhat different way in Brunner's Justice and the Social Order, transl. Mary Hottinger (Harper and Brothers, London, 1945), which is more dualistic in its characterisation of Christian ethics and Ramsey claims it is not altogether typical of Brunner's writing since it more closely resembles a Catholic natural law theory. See Ramsey, op. cit., p. 201.

[3] Brunner, D. I., p. 223.

sinful men to establish some order of justice in society by which human relationships are possible, so that justice becomes in fact the strange work of love by not allowing human community to be altogether destroyed.

The second task of the Christian corresponding to the first conservative one is thus to transform the social and natural order by redirecting it towards the coming kingdom of God. In this sense the Christian is to do the works of love, a love which "cannot exhaust itself in satisfying the natural demands of life" but which must become service to one's fellow men in the light of God's chosen destiny for mankind.[1] Ethical action at this polarity becomes revolutionary and the Christian is called to maintain a "very critical and challenging attitude towards the world in its present state."[2] Responding to the purpose of God to redeem this world from sin requires the recognition that "the will of God does not merely tell us to adapt ourselves, to accept, but also to resist, to protest, not to be 'conformed to this world.'"[3] In faith, the Christian accepts God's verdict upon this sinful world and believes in hope God's promise to fulfill his intention for creation, an intention which alone is to serve as the basis for the ethical decisions which a Christian must make in this world. This is the ethical meaning of conversion

---

[1] Ibid., p. 215.

[2] Ibid., p. 127.

[3] Ibid., p. 217.

and redemption for the Christian, that he is to ignore the existing orders and inaugurate a completely new line of action stemming from and moving towards the coming Kingdom of God.[1] Ethical action is transformed by the certainty of God's decisive action in the future, a transformation which Ramsey describes as a "teleologically dynamic connection--running backward, so to speak, between redemption, preservation and creation."[2] It is because of this hope, which is the acceptance of God's promise with certainty, that the task of the Christian in the world appears paradoxical.

> The existing orders, behind which stands the Divine order, constitutes the framework within which our service of our neighbour is to be performed; they form the vessel which we are to fill with the content of love. We have just said that the first thing necessary is not to alter this vessel but to fill it with the new content. But there are vessels which are contrary to this content of love, and it is quite possible that such vessels ought to be smashed. Where the existing order is no longer useful but harmful, it is ripe for destruction.[3]

Although emphasis on the creative activity of God shows the natural order to be indicative of God's promise to his creation, the redemptive activity causes a "fruitful tension" between these orders and the command of God that life will be fulfilled only in acts of love.[4] Therefore,

---

[1]Ramsey, op. cit., p. 204.

[2]Ibid., p. 205.

[3]Brunner, D. I., p. 218.

[4]Ramsey, op. cit., p. 202.

because of sin, the love which is possible in personal relationships is often "refracted" and one acts in a way which love alone does not require; yet one is obligated to act and does so in the conviction that God will fulfill his own intention for this world.[1]

These two action-pictures have indicated that for Brunner the Christian ethic is radically theocentric. The Christian ethic is characterised by the fact that "a man cannot begin to live by it except through a radical reorientation of will whereby the man's practical outlook is centred in God rather than in himself or in humanity."[2] This reorientation by which faith is constituted requires that "Every ethical consideration [be] connected with the whole Idea of God," that the moral decisions of the Christian flow from the actions of God in which his intention is revealed.[3] Indeed, Brunner goes so far as to claim that "Christian ethics is the science of human conduct as it is determined by Divine conduct" and it is just the nature of this determination which causes so many difficulties for a philosophical critique of his ethic.[4] Brunner's analysis of philosophical ethics led him to assert that the major antithesis which could not be resolved by natural morality--namely, the gap between "is" and "ought,"--could be overcome by a morality based

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] Robinson, op. cit., p. 180.

[3] Brunner, D. I., p. 85.

[4] Ibid., p. 86.

upon the revealing activity of God.

> It is He who unites what is with what ought to be, He, the Creator of Nature and of the spirit, of all that exists and of ideas; His will is the source of that which is and the basis of that which ought to be.[1]

What ought to be is known by understanding the action of God and moral action must be God acting through human beings.

> The Good is that which God does; the goodness of man can be no other than letting himself be placed within the activity of God. This is what "believing" means in the New Testament. And this faith is the principle of "ethics."[2]

Robinson interprets such an emphasis in Brunner's thought as heteronomous for in this "ethic of redemption" Brunner only "gave a one-sided version of the truth. He represented faith as if it were entirely a matter of standing, or rather of being placed, in the sun . . . "[3] Indeed this dependence of morality upon the action of God is the only alternative for one who has so radically conceived the sinfulness and evil which pervades the whole natural and human realm. Lewis has claimed that this is "a most important feature of recent theological controversy, namely the assumption that there is no alternative to the theory of special revelation other than that of making

---

[1] Ibid., p. 114.

[2] Ibid., p. 55.

[3] Robinson, op. cit., p. 175.

ethical ideas dependent on the nature of man himself."[1] This heteronomy can be seen to have two consequences for Brunner's explication of Christian morality and they are ones which constitute serious objections to his analysis.

On the one hand, Brunner claims that sin and evil pervade all areas of human reality except those which are touched by God or transformed by obedience to him. Sinfulness is characterised by bondage in which one's knowledge and experience are limited to the natural world and in which one cannot satisfactorily fulfill the moral demands felt by "natural man." This means that for Brunner man cannot discover what he ought to do by reason, but only by faith in which the frustrations of reason's quest for the good are overcome. Indeed

> the nearer anything lies to that centre of existence where we are concerned with the whole, that is, with man's relation to God and the being of the person, the greater is the disturbance of rational knowledge by sin.[2]

Faith is able to give direction to one's actions precisely because "it is itself controlled from without" and because faith "can only achieve self-knowledge because it is known by God."[3] This lack of the knowledge of God due to sin is experienced by the moral agent as a "sense of ought" and morality which flows from such a

---

[1]Lewis, Morals and Revelation, p. 14-15.

[2]Brunner, R&R, p. 383.

[3]D. I., p. 161.

source is a by-product of sin as well.

> Obedience due to a sense of unwilling constraint is bondage, and indeed the bondage of sin. If I feel I ought to do right, it is a sign that I cannot do it. If I could really do it, there would be no question of "ought" about it at all. The sense of "ought" shows me the Good at an infinite, impassable distance from my will.[1]

What is considered by some forms of natural morality to be an essential constituent of morality is considered by Brunner as evidence of the greatest sin, namely man's pride over against God, and it is this rejection of the moral which makes Christian faith as a source of morality so difficult to understand in Brunner's thought.

Brunner can only speak of faith in paradoxical terms for it is both a "passive yielding to God," a "self-determination which springs from the deliberate acceptance of one's life from the Hand of God," and it is God's gift and action upon man by the creation in him of "the new man."[2] "God demands the obedience of faith. God gives the earnest determination to do something."[3] Yet precisely who is the agent who acts here in "pulling oneself together" and what is the relationship between the old man living under sin and the new man created and given by God? Robinson suggests that Brunner here posits

---

[1] Ibid., p. 74. Here as Robinson suggests Brunner uses "ought" in its psychological rather than its logical meaning. Op. cit., p. 235.

[2] Ibid., p. 161.

[3] Ibid., p. 81.

> whether wittingly or not, what I have called a sphere, a life, an existence, a nature, a heart which is on every side and in the most absolute sense the gift of God. Even for the Christian, however, there is alongside this gift another reality, an alter ego, the sinful ingrown self; and between these two there is, one can only suspect, an unremitting warfare.[1]

If this account is true, then Brunner has himself adopted an understanding of the self for which he accused Kant of being guilty, and, unless Brunner is prepared to admit that for the Christian as for the natural moralist ethics is characterised by the antithesis of "is" and "ought" within man's own being, then must he not say that the "new man" does not exist at all? It would seem that Brunner must say this new man exists only in the act of obedience by which God's spiritual power is appropriated and is therefore never a possession of man or a substance however "ghostly" within man.

The deeper question which this raises, however, has to do with what sense it makes to speak of a Christian "morality" at all. Brunner himself claims that certainly any old or untransformed notion of morality is not suitable for understanding the Christian life at all. Rather,

> This is the new state of life, that man's life is no more centred in the "ought," but in the "is"--in the "is" which God has given. The word of grace is not an imperative like that of the law, but an indicative. Not "Man must be" but "You are with God," through God's act.[2]

---

[1]Robinson, op. cit., p. 235.

[2]Brunner, G&M, p. 81-2.

Indeed the whole of the Christian ethic would be characterised by indicatives only were it not for the fact that sin still pervades man's natural life. Since "round [man's] neck there still hangs the old Adam . . . the indicative of the Divine promise becomes the imperative of the Divine command."[1] Robinson argues therefore that Brunner's understanding of Christian ethics depends upon the derivation of an "ought" from an "is" even though this "is" is supernaturally conceived, in terms of Divine activity. Thus

> he did not just derive the moral from the natural but allowed the latter to swallow it up and actually substituted the natural, even if it was the supernatural naturally conceived, for the normative.[2]

This is "the instance par excellence of the naturalistic fallacy in Brunner."[3] Lewis also suggests the loss of the distinctively moral character of "ought" when it is made to be dependent upon a religious source. Since our entire knowledge of the Good is a result of God's revelation of his person and will, there can be no autonomous or objective inquiry into the nature of Good by which man's obligation to do it could be known. In Brunner's attempt to preserve the objectivity of the Good, he has in fact made it a derivative notion which requires the support of

---

[1] D. I., p. 80.

[2] Robinson, op. cit., p. 235.

[3] Ibid., p. 234.

God's will for its character to be known and fulfilled.[1] The result of this identification of God's will and the Good would mean that in Brunner's analysis of Christian ethical decision there is a great "either-or."

> In itself the outright rejection of natural morality, lock, stock and barrel, is bound to issue in the dilemma, either law without content or else life without law, either formalism or naturalism. Moreover, in turn, this dilemma inevitably leads to another, to the unhappy choice between a sheerly heteronomous authority on the one side, which will arbitrarily supply the missing content, and a completely autonomous way of life on the other, without authority, norm or principle.[2]

This interpretation clearly hinges upon what Brunner meant by the claim that "What God does and wills is good; all that opposes the will of God is bad. The Good has its basis and its existence solely in the will of God."

What is suggested by the analysis of Brunner using the model of self-involving language is that from within the perspective of faith there can be no strict separation of ethics and epistemology.[3] What the Christian claims is that God reveals himself to man as the reality of the highest Good, a reality which can be recognised only by man's willingness to examine and to live his own life in relationship to it. The attitude of faith which characterises the Christian way of life is for Brunner a judgement that the whole of life is to be seen in its true

---

[1] Lewis, Morals and the New Theology, p. 25f.

[2] Robinson, op. cit., p. 194.

[3] Cf. Lewis, Morals and Revelation, p. 31-3.

nature by accepting the verdict which God has made upon it and this means to know reality in its relationship to a holy God. Faith is, secondly, a commitment to living as one determined by the intentions and actions of God and the adoption of a way of life in which a loving relationship with God and one's fellowmen can be realised. It is the claim of faith that goodness is only known as one is prepared to take up a stance with regard to God and it is a stance which, Brunner claims, cannot be justified by reference to any natural morality or any arguments of reason, but which is the result of God's willing and giving it.

CHAPTER VII

DIALECTICAL ETHICS

The work of Reinhold Niebuhr affords us another unique insight into the relationship of indicative and imperative in Christian ethical decision-making. In his intellectual autobiography Niebuhr said,

> I cannot and do not claim to be a theologian. I have taught Christian Social Ethics for a quarter of a century and have also dealt in the ancillary field of "apologetics." My avocational interest as a kind of circuit rider in the colleges and universities has prompted an interest in the defense and justification of the Christian faith in a secular age, particularly among what Schleiermacher called Christianity's "intellectual despisers." I have never been very competent in the nice points of pure theology; and I must confess that I have not been sufficiently interested heretofore to acquire the competence.[1]

Niebuhr did not claim to be a theologian in the systematic sense of this task and his work does not resemble any kind of dogmatic account of the relationship of God and man of the kind we see in either Tillich or Brunner. Indeed it is precisely because of his ability as a prophetic voice in the contemporary world that Niebuhr's understanding of the morality implicit in the Christian faith is of such consequence. As Brunner has commented, "With him theology

---

[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, "Intellectual Autobiography," in Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social, and Political Thought, edited by Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall, The Library of Living Theology, Vol. 2 (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1956), p. 3.

broke into the world; theology was no longer quarantined, and men of letters, philosophers, sociologists, historians, even statesmen, began to listen. Once more theology was becoming a spiritual force to be reckoned with."[1] Niebuhr's was a voice that penetrated critically into the dominant institutions and modes of thought characteristic of western civilisation with both negative, harsh judgements and positive moral imperatives directed towards the actualisation of love in human history.

Niebuhr's critique of culture and his insistence upon the necessity for responsible moral decisions do not begin from an examination of the nature and content of God's will, as in Brunner, but rather from his perceptive insight into the nature of man and of historical existence. Our analysis of his ethic will begin therefore with Niebuhr's understanding of man's nature and destiny from which he both criticises traditional philosophical and religious thought and reconstructs his own version of natural law. From this perspective we will then be able to show the relevance of love as both the ground and the goal of ethical action. Niebuhr's discussion of love as the "law of life" and as the "impossible possibility" is important not only for the insight it offers regarding the relationship of faith and reason but also for the type of decision-making which it implies and requires. An analysis of the logic of decision in Niebuhr's thought

---

[1]Emil Brunner, "Some Remarks on Reinhold Niebuhr's Work as a Christian Thinker," in Kegley and Bretall, op. cit., p. 29.

will conclude our study and will indicate the dynamic and self-renewing quality of Niebuhr's ethic in which the creative tension characteristic of human life is controlled and fulfilled in man's encounter with the love of God.

Like Brunner, Niebuhr begins his major anthropological work, as well as his interpretation of Christian ethics, with criticisms of previous notions of man and of the moral imperative to which he owes obedience, and it is in the context of these negative insights that his own constructive understanding of these issues can best be interpreted. Niebuhr claims in particular that two major positions have characterised religious and philosophical thinking about this subject and that these are inadequate both for their failure to take the whole nature of man into account and for their inability to yield an ethic in which human life may be fulfilled. The presupposition which gives rise to such criticism is thus Niebuhr's belief that both rationalist and irrationalist accounts of human existence cannot do justice to the dual nature of man. Thus an ethic which will be adequate to man as he is will require a firmer foundation than has been so far provided.

> How difficult it is to do justice to both the uniqueness of man and his affinities with the world of nature below him is proved by the almost unvarying tendency of those philosophies, which describe and emphasize the rational faculties of man or his capacity for self-transcendence to forget his relation to nature and to identify him, prematurely and unqualifiedly, with the divine and the eternal; and

> of naturalistic philosophies to obscure the uniqueness of man.[1]

Niebuhr's interest in the historical existence of man and his insistence that the realities of experience must be the test of any anthropology or ethics is indicative of his use of the empirical method in theology and supports the view of one of his admirers that

> to a mind like that of Niebuhr the empirical method, when conceived in a properly broad way, has the great advantage over the rationalistic, that it recognizes the limitations of man's finite reason and is less likely to foster intellectual pretensions.[2]

This method will become clear by examining the nature of Niebuhr's argument and will show also the way in which Niebuhr is able to weave together insights from biblical faith and from experience in a very different way from Tillich.

In opposition to Tillich, Niebuhr's insight into the nature of man and his appeal to the truth of the Christian faith do not indicate a willingness to accept sympathetically the dominant trends of thought of his era. Thus, as Richardson has suggested, Niebuhr is more "prophet" than "apologist."

> He is far too critical of the presuppositions of our age to be a conventional apologist . . . In an important sense a prophet's function is

---

[1]Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1941), Vol. I, p. 4; hereafter cited as NDM, I or II.

[2]George F. Thomas, "Niebuhr on Reason and Metaphysics; Reinhold Niebuhr: A Symposium," in Union Seminary Quarterly, Vol. XI, No. 4 (1956), p. 21; hereafter cited as "Symposium."

> exactly the opposite of an apologist's: instead of making sympathetic contact with the thought of his age the prophet is compelled by an inner necessity to criticize and reject it.[1]

Niebuhr defined his opponents in the intellectual world as the rationalists or idealists and the irrationalists or naturalists each of whom in various ways attempts to offer an explanation of man and his moral life which is ultimately one-sided and therefore distorted.[2] On the one hand, rationality places the greatest emphasis on man's ability to transcend his physical and historical existence to enquire into the character of that existence or to explain the essence of human nature. Man's uniqueness, rationality claims, is a function of his rational faculties, the ability of his nous to think, reflect, enquire, argue, calculate, reason, and it is this capacity which is allowed to subdue and transform the aspects of man's existence into some kind of unitary or coherent system of thought. It was particularly in the classical rationalism of Plato and Aristotle that Niebuhr found the most objectionable tendencies and ones which are still present in modern versions of rationalism. On the one

---

[1]Alan Richardson, "Reinhold Niebuhr as Apologist," in Kegley and Bretall, op. cit., p. 216.

[2]In choosing these two views Niebuhr shows his affinity with Brunner who also argued against the moral philosophy of idealism and naturalism. See above, pages 198-99. Cf. Brunner, "Some Remarks . . .," in which he notices the influence of his thought especially in Niebuhr's NDM, p. 32-3, and Niebuhr's "Reply to Interpretation and Criticism," in Kegley and Bretall, op. cit., in which he acknowledges this debt to Brunner (p. 431-2). Hereafter cited as "Reply."

hand,

> rationalism practically identifies rational man (who is essential man) with the divine; for reason is, as the creative principle, identical with God.[1]

On the other hand, this spark of the divine in man results in the dualistic tendency of rationalism.

> The dualism has the consequence for the doctrine of man of identifying the body with evil and of assuming the essential goodness of mind or spirit.[2]

Niebuhr is thus opposed to the picture of man which is offered by those who would use reason only to account for the uniqueness of man.

Yet Niebuhr's criticisms of rationality go much deeper than this, for he is also concerned with the metaphysical or ontological systems which are created by reason as explanations of man's existence and history and as the source for moral imperatives by which man is to be guided. It is this which idealism, in both its subjective and objective forms, attempts to do and Niebuhr offered several reasons for its inadequacy as an interpretation of man.[3] Rationalism searches for a unitary theory in which the contradictions and incongruities of life, history, and even nature can be resolved and, since this

---

[1] NDM I, p. 7.

[2] Ibid.; cf. p. 112.

[3] Sometimes Niebuhr speaks as though idealism were only one form of rationalism, cf. ibid., p. 20, 33; and other times as though rationality is by definition idealistic since it both emphasises the mind of man and seeks unitary meaning within a changing reality.

is of primary concern to the rationalist, the actual facts may be misinterpreted to fit the systematic explanation.

> Things and events may be too unique to fit into any system of meaning; and their uniqueness is destroyed by a premature coordination to a system of meaning, particularly a system which identifies meaning with rationality.[1]

This distortion of the uniqueness and the particularity both of the historical moment and of man's concrete self means, for Niebuhr, that "the whole realm of genuine selfhood . . . is beyond the comprehension of various systems of philosophy. Neither Aristotle nor Kant succeeds in accounting for the concrete human self as free agent."[2] Furthermore rationalism in its concern for ontology is characterised by a "passion for identifying 'being' with a fixed structure, so that temporal events are cast into the category of 'appearance' . . . " and this, Niebuhr claims, is a "permanent characteristic of the metaphysical mind."[3] Evidence for this can be found both in the attempt of rationalism to resolve prematurely "realms of coherence and meaning [which] may stand in rational contradiction to each other"; and in its refusal

---

[1]Niebuhr, Christian Realism and Political Problems (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1953), p. 176; hereafter cited as CRPP.

[2]Ibid., p. 178.

[3]Niebuhr, The Self and the Dramas of History (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1955), p. 122; hereafter cited as SDH.

to recognise that "there are configurations and structures which stand athwart every rationally conceived system of meaning and cannot be appreciated in terms of the alternative efforts to bring the structure completely into one system or the other."[1] Thus Niebuhr argues that

> since ontology is the "science of being," it has its limitations in describing any being or being per se which contains mysteries and meanings which are not within the limits of reason.[2]

Among these mysteries are the historical existence of man which becomes nonsensical when interpreted by those who seek "to comprehend the patterns of historical destiny within a framework of ontology"[3] and human freedom which in the end "does not find its norm in the structures either of nature or of reason."[4]

---

[1] CRPP, p. 177.

[2] "Reply," p. 432.

[3] Ibid., p. 433. This reply is directed to Tillich who claimed that Niebuhr "understands ontology as a way of reducing the dynamic-dramatic history of creation, fall, salvation, and consummation into a static system which is determined by rational necessity." Tillich argues that his own understanding of ontology, which is not based on a calculating reason but on a "logos-type" of reason, could accommodate these existential contradictions (being and becoming, freedom and necessity, individual and universal, etc.) quite nicely and therefore that Niebuhr need not and should not have rejected ontology altogether. "Reinhold Niebuhr's Doctrine of Knowledge," in Kegley and Bretall, op. cit., p. 37-40. Surely, however, it is precisely Tillich's tendency towards monism which Niebuhr claims will not do and therefore Tillich's arguments "will hardly allay Niebuhr's suspicion of ontology." Thomas, "Niebuhr on Reason and Metaphysics," p. 17. Cf. Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics (Harper and Brothers, New York, 1935), p. 23-4; hereafter cited as ICE.

[4] CRPP, p. 182.

At the other extreme of rationalism is the view of human existence which stresses man's relation to nature as the most important aspect of man and which generally appears in the form of a "romantic protest against rationalism." This emphasis on the vitalities of physical existence is indicative of an interest in the particular and concrete drives within man and in man's organic relation to the world of nature as a whole. The protest is directed against rationalistic asceticism in its attempt to divide the self into separate aspects of good and evil for in so doing rationality robs human nature of its energy and force. Niebuhr described this as "the romantic fear of the enervation of impulsive spontaneity and vitality through rational discipline."[1] What is being claimed by this romantic naturalism is not only that the discipline of reason is "unnatural" and does not do justice to the whole man but also that reason is not "the organizing and forming principle of human life."[2] Man is most basically a creature subject to the vicissitudes of nature and it is that nature which provides the source of value for human life. Reason is thus considered to be a harmful capacity of man which has "disintegrating and divisive tendencies," the use of which can only result in forcing man to become what he by nature is not by some kind of external restraint.[3] Rather than

---

[1] NDM I, p. 34.

[2] Ibid., p. 37.

[3] Ibid.

emphasising the freedom of man to transcend the limitations of existence through reason's activity, naturalism tends to stress the necessities of life which determine and shape human beings as part of the whole structure of nature. Yet this romantic view of man is inadequate, according to Niebuhr, because it moves too far to the other extreme.

> If rationalism tends to depreciate the significance, power, inherent order and unity of biological impulse, romanticism tends to appreciate these without recognizing that human nature knows no animal impulse in its pure form.[1]

Thus, Niebuhr claims, it will not do justice again to the whole nature of man to claim that he is nothing but a creature of nature. Naturalists should recognise, he argues, that

> Every biological fact and every animal impulse, however obvious its relation to the world below man, is altered because of its incorporation into the human psyche. The freedom of man consists not only, as it were, of the windows of mind which look out from the second story; but also of vents on every level which allow every natural impulse a freedom which animals do not know. Romanticism is therefore wrong in ascribing either the unity or the vitality of animal impulse in man to pure nature.[2]

The way in which reason modifies natural impulses to make them uniquely human is thus not taken into account by naturalists and thus an adequate picture of human existence has not been rendered.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 40.

[2] Ibid.

Again, however, Niebuhr's concern with irrationalism is more penetrating than this since he does share with this view of man a basic mistrust of ontology and of rational systems of any kind. It would seem then that he would share with the existentialists an emphasis on the actual self of man as it is in historical existence, an existence which always eludes systematic formulations or the discernment of patterns.[1] However, Niebuhr is not willing to stress the "stark incoherences" which irrationalism points out to the exclusion of the "basic coherences" that rationality may discover in existence.

> Niebuhr starts not from an assumption but from real life as he has found it, and there he discovers a paradoxical admixture of rationality and irrationality. Not only are there coherences in human experience but there are also non-personal "vitalities" which limit the rational will which seeks to control them. Consequently every "turning point" of history is a point at which rationality and mystery intersect, and the irrationality, the mysterious non-intelligibility, is just as important as the rationality.[2]

It is by comparison with the "irrationalist existentialism" of a theologian like Barth that Niebuhr's refusal to rely solely on the unmitigated mystery of the meaning of life becomes clear. For Niebuhr is unwilling to accept the two alternatives offered by irrationalism in its description of the situation of man and particularly of man's

---

[1] Indeed Niebuhr quotes the words of Kierkegaard in opposition to the system-builders who display "the idealistic passion for a universal system" (NDM I, p. 81). See Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, transl. David E. Swenson (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1941), Part II, Chapter 2.

[2] Richardson, op. cit., p. 221.

relationship to God: either the individual becomes "his own creator and end" and, since there is nothing beyond man to require his conformity, passionate subjectivity rather than rational analysis determines the criterion for action;[1] or one relies, as in the religious irrationalism of Barth, on the "lightning flash" of revelation as a result of which "the whole commerce between the foolishness of the Gospel and the wisdom of the world . . . is disavowed."[2] Niebuhr thus rejects a too simple irrationalism in which the use of reason is altogether abrogated. One commentator is led to claim therefore that:

> Niebuhr's appeal as an apologist lies in his honest refusal either to rationalize the stark incoherences of human existence in some academic theory of metaphysical idealism or on the other hand to deny the basic coherences of our experience in the interest of some irrationalist or existentialist view of the type which is nowadays so fashionable.[3]

We must examine Niebuhr's own insight into the nature and existence of man in which this twofold aspect of life is described.

The sources for Niebuhr's understanding of man are to be found both in the biblical revelation of the encounter between God and man and in his own critical analysis of Western cultural and intellectual history.

---

[1] SDH, p. 67-8. Cf. CRPP, p. 192-3.

[2] CRPP, p. 194.

[3] Richardson, op. cit., p. 221-2.

He begins therefore with the understanding that there can be no presuppositionless inquiry into this matter but that, by the same token, one's presuppositions can be justified empirically by reference to man himself. Since "experience and faith interpenetrate each other on every level," it would be a mistake to represent his method as a description of man without the insight of faith to which specifically religious claims can then be added by way of support or confirmation.[1] Niebuhr's historical analysis leads him to the conclusion that no adequate understanding of man has yet been offered, particularly since the rationalists and irrationalists arrive at contradictory conclusions. What is needed, Niebuhr claims, is "a principle of interpretation which can do justice to both the height of human self-transcendence and the organic unity between the spirit of man and his physical life" and both the one-sided interpretations fail to achieve such a principle.[2] It is here then that religious claims are important for man is "unable to comprehend himself in his full stature of freedom without a principle of comprehension which is beyond his comprehension."[3] From the perspective of the

---

[1] William J. Wolf, "Reinhold Niebuhr's Doctrine of Man," in Kegley and Bretall, op. cit., p. 232-3. This latter type of analysis is done by Aquinas and this, in Niebuhr's view, is why Aquinas' method is inadequate. See CRPP, p. 188-9.

[2] NDM I, p. 123.

[3] Ibid., p. 125.

encounter between God and man, portrayed in the Bible in dramatic terms, man can be seen as he truly is, for here can be found a principle of interpretation which, though it transcends the full grasp of man's reason, it illuminates both the source and the meaning of human life. Thus Niebuhr can claim that "the Christian view of man is sharply distinguished from all alternative views by the manner in which it interprets and relates three aspects of human existence to each other," and proceed to demonstrate the way in which this view presents the most adequate account of human existence.[1]

The truth about man which naturalism emphasises but cannot satisfactorily explain is man's creaturehood, and Niebuhr considers it ironic that

> a culture, intent upon understanding nature and boasting of ever more impressive achievements in the "conquest" of nature, has become involved in ever more serious misunderstandings of human nature, of the self in its uniqueness, and in its dramatic-historical environment.[2]

Both naturalism and rationalism, however, prove their inadequate understanding of man's nature in a further sense, because, as Niebuhr argues, they offer two alternative and mutually exclusive bases for moral decision. One of these, characteristic of romanticism, claims that man's unity with nature is a positive good which is to be enjoyed and fulfilled through "natural," and therefore ethical, actions. The other alternative, offered by

---

[1] Ibid., p. 150. [2] SDH, p. 144.

mysticism or idealism, stresses the disunity between man's essential nature and his physical nature and encourages ethical actions in which man can deny and rise above his creatureliness. The viewpoint on man's nature which Niebuhr would suggest, based on the biblical understanding, claims that

> the finiteness, dependence and the insufficiency of man's mortal life are facts which belong to God's plan of creation and must be accepted with reverence and humility.[1]

This means that an emphasis on the goodness of man's natural life requires the recognition that this goodness is based upon God's evaluation of his creation; only this recognition can save such an emphasis from becoming distorted, perverted, and ultimately from failing altogether to provide an adequate foundation for moral decision. The goodness of man as a creature is thus his goodness in relation to God and it is this relation which can prevent the depreciation of man's natural life into something evil which could stand between man and God. The biblical view can therefore insist upon

> man's weakness, dependence, and finiteness, on his involvement in the necessities and contingencies of the natural world, without, however, regarding this finiteness as, of itself, a source of evil in man.[2]

The creatureliness of man can be most realistically judged from the perspective of God's affirmation

---

[1] NDM I, p. 167. [2] Ibid., p. 150.

of that life, an affirmation which also provides the basis for ethical decisions.

Likewise, rationalism grasped a truth about man which it attempted but finally failed to formulate adequately. Man is a creature "in the image of God"; he has a capacity for transcending himself and for using his rational faculty to interpret and order his existence in the world. Man thus exhibits a freedom from the necessities of nature and an individuality expressed in his creative dealings with his own life. Likewise, however, even rationalism cannot do justice to this capacity of man for Niebuhr would claim that an aspect of this freedom of man is precisely his ability to choose to stand outside his reason, to take perspectives on his life which go beyond his rational faculties to create.

> This quality of imagining indeterminate perspectives is more mysterious than what the rationalists call his reason because man can ask whether reason can comprehend the order of reality and whether such order as it may see comprehends the whole of reality.[1]

Rationality does not take into account its own limitations, according to Niebuhr, and the person who so limits his life will miss other viewpoints which his capacity for transcendence may offer and which may prove more true to human reality as he experiences it. Indeed Niebuhr considered it part of the general revelation of God to man that man could, at the limit of his consciousness,

---

[1]Wolf, op. cit., p. 236.

confront an "other" standing over against his rational abilities. "The soul," he claims, "which reaches the outermost rims of its own consciousness, must also come in contact with God, for He impinges upon that consciousness."[1] In that impingement man can find both the affirmation of his capacity for self-transcendence and a judgement against its overextension. In relation to God,

> the spirit of man finds a home in which it can understand its stature of freedom. But there it also finds the limits of its freedom, the judgment which is spoken against it and, ultimately, the mercy which makes such a judgment sufferable.[2]

This second aspect of man's life is therefore viewed most clearly also from the viewpoint of revelation.

It is in his description of the third aspect of human life, however, that Niebuhr indicates his most serious concern with the analysis of the nature and destiny of man and it is in discussing this characteristic that the logic of Niebuhr's argument becomes clear. For Niebuhr has been carefully and in great historical and cultural detail outlining an onlook regarding man from which Niebuhr's moral concerns are not, nor can they be, separated. God's revelation of himself to man not only provides the foundation for an adequate and realistic assessment of the character of human life but also indicates the moral attitude which is appropriate towards that life. Niebuhr does not describe the nature of human life

---

[1] NDM I, p. 127. [2] Ibid., p. 126.

therefore without reference to the attitude which man ought to adopt towards his own existence. Indeed he finds attitudes implicit in the other accounts of human existence and argues that these attitudes are either naive or pretentious. They are naive since "both the majesty and the tragedy of human life exceed the dimension within which modern culture seeks to comprehend human existence."[1] They are pretentious not only because they make the relative and particular insights of men into absolute truths but also because they do not take into account the possibility and the presence of radical evil in human life.

> The fact that a culture which identifies God with some level of human consciousness, either rational or super-rational, or with some order of nature, invariably falsifies the human situation and fails to appreciate either the total stature of freedom in man or the complexity of the problem of evil in him, is the most telling negative proof for the Biblical faith.[2]

Thus there is a need for this new perspective on human life which is given to man from beyond his existence to provide man with an understanding of the moral character of his life.

The advantage of the biblical perspective is that

> It affirms that the evil in man is a consequence of his inevitable though not necessary unwillingness to acknowledge his dependence, to accept his finiteness and to admit his insecurity, an unwillingness which involves

---

[1] Ibid., p. 122.

[2] Ibid., p. 131.

> him in the vicious circle of accentuating the insecurity from which he seeks escape.[1]

Niebuhr thus defines the sin of man as his "willful refusal to acknowledge the finite and determinate character of his existence" and it is this moral attitude on the part of those who would understand that life apart from any religious affirmations which Niebuhr considers fatal to them. The evil in human existence is not the result of man's freedom to transcend himself and it is not caused by the conditions of his finitude; evil cannot be identified with either aspect of human life. Nor is evil the result of this dual nature of life, for man was created both finite and free and was proclaimed good. What is evil is man's "will-to-power which overreaches the limits of human creatureliness," and it is this intention to become something other than human which lies at the root of sin.[2] The contradiction of finitude and freedom does, however, serve as the "occasion" for sin since man is insecure in this duality and seeks a resolution of it. On the one hand, he seeks such a resolution by emphasising his freedom.

> Man is ignorant and involved in the limitations of a finite mind; but he pretends that he is not limited. He assumes that he can gradually transcend finite limitations until his mind becomes identical with universal mind.[3]

This sin of pride has a complement in the sin of sensuality by which man seeks to resolve the duality at the other

---

[1] Ibid., p. 150.

[2] Ibid., p. 178.

[3] Ibid., p. 178-9.

extreme.

> Sometimes man seeks to solve the problem of the contradiction of finiteness and freedom, not by seeking to hide his finiteness and comprehending the world into himself, but by seeking to hide his freedom and by losing himself in some aspect of the world's vitalities.[1]

It is this intention to attempt to escape one's humanity which Niebuhr describes as sinful and it is an intention which can only be overcome when one adopts the intention of God with regard to one's life.

For Niebuhr therefore, the root of sin is unbelief or the refusal to see and acknowledge that one's life is to be lived in relation to God.[2] This is the reason he can claim that

> when life is seen in its total dimension, the sense of God and the sense of sin are involved in the same act of self-consciousness; for to be self-conscious is to see the self as a finite object separated from essential reality; but also related to it, or there could be no knowledge of separation.[3]

In the notion of sin the religious and moral dimensions of life come together for it is defined as both a religious and a moral phenomenon.

> The religious dimension of sin is man's rebellion against God, his effort to usurp the place of God. The moral and social dimension of sin is injustice. The ego which falsely makes itself the centre of existence in its pride and will-to-power inevitably subordinates other life to its will and thus does injustice to other life.[4]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 179.

[2] Ibid., p. 182-3.

[3] ICE, p. 67.

[4] NDM I, p. 179.

The vertical dimension of sin is characterised therefore by man's unwillingness to view his existence as one to which God is related and in which he became involved; corresponding to this is the horizontal dimension of sin in which man's pride and self-love manifest themselves in unjust and unloving relationships with his neighbours. Therefore we need to examine the way in which man comes to recognise the essential life from which he is separated, what relationship God has to life as it ought to be, and how the recognition of the law of life can be effected in the moral decisions which are a part of man's social and political life.

Niebuhr claims that "the sense of sin is peculiarly the product of religious imagination" and "is the consequence of measuring life in its total dimension and discovering the self both related to and separated from life in its essence."[1] From the human perspective, it is possible to find a good deal of evidence for the failures and wickedness of men and this Niebuhr does throughout his writings. Thus it is true to say that he offers the doctrine of original sin "not so much as a doctrine of revelation as a transcript of experience when man looks at himself with his guards down."[2] The corollary of this assessment of the human situation is the realisation that "the human spirit is set in this dimension of depth in

---

[1] ICE, p. 65.

[2] Wolf, op. cit., p. 240.

such a way that it is able to apprehend, but not to comprehend, the total dimension."[1] This recognition, which man comes to as a result of the free transcendence of his spirit, has therefore both a positive and a negative aspect: it is positive to the extent that it constitutes the greatness of human life and it is negative in that it shows man as a prisoner of finitude from which he continually seeks escape.

> The fact that man can transcend himself in infinite regression and cannot find the end of life except in God is the mark of his creativity and uniqueness; closely related to this capacity is his inclination to transmute his partial and finite self and his partial and finite values into the infinite good. Therein lies his sin.[2]

What man can recognise from his perspective is thus that there is an "other" or a beyond to which he is related, a recognition whose meaning is to be shown by an encounter with God in the person of Jesus. This "consciousness and memory of an original perfection" is, for Niebuhr, the "locus of original righteousness" in man by which he knows the demand of essential life requiring obedience in his moral decisions.[3]

This recognition from the human perspective by which man comes to see his greatness and his sin must itself be balanced with the awareness that only in God's revealing of himself has the source, the goal, and the

---

[1] ICE, p. 66.

[2] NDM I, p. 122.

[3] Ibid., p. 276-7.

meaning of life been demonstrated in its fullness. Man's spirit

> is always capable of envisaging possibilities of order, unity, and harmony above and beyond the contingent and arbitrary realities of its physical existence; but it is not capable (because of its finiteness) of incarnating, all the higher values which it discerns; nor even of adequately defining, the unconditioned good which it dimly apprehends as the ground and goal of all its contingent values.[1]

It is here that, to use Ramsey's phrases, "autonomous reason" and "Christonomous reason" can be seen in dialogue with each other, for what is revealed in Christ is what has been dimly perceived by man in his most intense struggles to come to terms with the meaning of life.[2]

> The ethical norm of history as comprehended by the "natural" resources of man, by his sober examination of the facts and requirements of life in human society, is mutual love. Man knows both by experience and by the demand for coherence in his rational nature, that life ought not to be lived at cross purposes, that conflict within the self, and between the self and others, is an evil. In that sense love is the law of life according to the insights of natural religion and morality.[3]

What Niebuhr claims is that the life of love which Christ led and by which God reveals his intention for human life has a threefold relation to this natural insight of man.

> It (a) completes what is incomplete in their apprehensions of meaning; (b) it clarifies obscurities which threaten the sense of

---

[1] ICE, p. 66.

[2] Paul Ramsey, "Reinhold Niebuhr: Christian Love and Natural Law," in Nine Modern Moralists, p. 141. This essay was originally published in Kegley and Bretall, op. cit., p. 80-123.

[3] NDM II, p. 81-2.

> meaning; and (c) it finally corrects falsifications of meaning which human egoism introduces into the sense of meaning by reason of its effort to comprehend the whole of life from an inadequate centre of comprehension.[1]

The full and unambiguous meaning of this law of life is thus to be found by coming to terms with the life and the teachings of Jesus Christ in whom "transcendent agape" is present in history.

It is in Christ that man discovers both the true nature of human life in its heights and its depths and the character of God who from beyond history makes present the ideal possibility for meaningful human life. In his relation to human existence, Christ is the "second Adam" for in him "the norm of human nature" is incarnated. His life actualizes the fullest possibilities of human life and at the same time reveals the limitations of that life in its finiteness and sinfulness. A morality which would base itself on Jesus' life and action cannot make his life or the kingdom of the future about which he preached into a simple ideal or goal which man is capable of achieving by his own efforts. It was this kind of morality which was characteristic of the liberal Christianity that Niebuhr so radically opposed. A teleological ethic which encourages man's fulfillment of some ideal, in this case the kingdom of God, by man's effort to follow the example of Jesus fails in at least two respects for Niebuhr. It is naive in its assessment of man's ability

---

[1] Ibid., p. 81.

to overcome sinfulness by his own efforts and thus becomes guilty of too much pride in human accomplishment. In this sense, Niebuhr claims that liberalism was founded on a "utopian illusion" which had not accepted the lessons of history and was unwilling to recognise the thoroughness of sin's hold upon life.[1] Its second failure is its tendency to make absolute what is historically and culturally relative, thus identifying what ought to be with some facet of man's existence in either its personal or its social form. Liberalism has failed to take account of man's ability always to transcend what he now is and to assess his historical situation from a new perspective; thus it becomes complacent and self-satisfied as a way of life. The type of ethical decision encouraged by liberalism is a rational ethic of prudence in which the moral agent calculates his own and others' interests to achieve some kind of mutually acceptable solution.[2] Against this

---

[1]See Niebuhr's arguments against liberalism in NDM I, p. 145-6, 279-80, 287-8; NDM II, p. 121-6, 72-4; and throughout ICE, Faith and History (Nisbet and Co., London, 1949), and Reflections on the End of an Era (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1936). See also those who oppose Niebuhr's understanding of liberalism in "Symposium," especially Theodore M. Green, "My Reactions to Niebuhr," p. 3-7, and George F. Thomas, op. cit., p. 21. See also Daniel Day Williams, "Niebuhr and Liberalism," in Kegley and Bretall, op. cit., in which he says: "Wherever we encounter the belief that 'all social relations are being brought progressively under the law of Christ,' and wherever we see the Christian Gospel expressed as a moral pronouncement which can be made intelligible as a purely rational ethical ideal, there we have encountered the liberal Christian spirit as Niebuhr sees it" (p. 198). The quotation is from Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1960), p. xxi.

[2]See Faith and History, p. 178, hereafter cited as F&H. Cf. NDM II, p. 81ff., 247.

interpretation of the significance of Jesus for the moral life, Niebuhr sets the "impossibility" of Jesus' command to love.

> In genuine prophetic Christianity the moral qualities of the Christ are not only our hope, but our despair. Out of that despair arises a new hope centred in the revelation of God in Christ. In such faith Christ and the Cross reveal not only the possibilities but the limits of human finitude in order that a more ultimate hope may arise from the contrite recognition of those limits. Christian faith is, in other words, a type of optimism which places its ultimate confidence in the love of God and not the love of man, in the ultimate and transcendent unity of reality and not in tentative and superficial harmonies of existence which human ingenuity may contrive. It insists, quite logically, that this ultimate hope becomes possible only to those who no longer place their confidence in purely human possibilities. Repentence is thus the gateway into the Kingdom of God.[1]

To discover in Christ the norm of human life is thus, for Niebuhr, to acknowledge the gap between life as it is and life as it ought to be, a gap which cannot be bridged by any form of human self-assertion.

On the other hand, however, Niebuhr also opposed any form of mysticism in which man must deny himself as he is in order to fulfill the demands of the Christian ethical life. Obedience to Christ according to this understanding of ethical decision would require that the soul of man become freed from natural impulses and drives and from any distractions or responsibilities so that it might contemplate the eternal.[2] Again this view of man's

---

[1] ICE, p. 120-1.

[2] NDM II, p. 94.

relationship to Christ errs in its estimate of human life in that man's creaturehood, his finitude and limitations, are considered obstacles to his perfection, obstacles which must be denied or overcome if one is to enter the kingdom. This identification of the sinfulness of human life with man's historical or natural existence ignores the character of sin as a function of man's intentions with regard to that life and thus cannot do justice to God's own assessment of the life he created. The result of this misinterpretation of human existence is, however, that mysticism, or any other form of world-denying ethic, ultimately denies the relevance of God's action in Christ to history. Thus, Niebuhr claims that the ideal of love

> is not an ideal magically superimposed upon life by a revelation which has no relation to total human experience. The whole conception of life revealed in the Cross of Christian faith is not a pure negation of, or irrelevance toward, the moral ideals of "natural man." While the final heights of the love ideal condemn as well as fulfill the moral canons of common sense, the ideal is involved in every moral aspiration and achievement. It is the genius and the task of prophetic religion to insist on the organic relation between historic human existence and that which is both the ground and the fulfillment of this existence, the transcendent.[1]

Against such a view of God's relation to man's existence in history, Niebuhr claims that the "God of Christian revelation is not disengaged from, but engaged in, the world by His most majestic attributes; it is consequently not the highest perfection for man to achieve a unity of

---

[1] ICE, p. 104-5.

being from which all natural and historical vitalities have been subtracted."[1]

There is a two-fold aspect to man's encounter with Christ therefore which leads man to realise both the extent of his separation from what he ought to be and the urgency with which he ought to seek its fulfillment in his present situation.

> The full dimension of human life includes not only an impossible ideal, but realities of sin and evil which are more than simple imperfections and which prove that the ideal is something more than the product of a morbidly sensitive religious fantasy. Anything less than perfect love in human life is destructive of life. All human life stands under an impending doom because it does not live by the law of love.[2]

Such a recognition that what is necessary is impossible, that what is required of human life is perfect love, that "the ideal in its perfect form lies beyond the capacities of human nature," is the paradox which one who would have faith in Christ must be prepared to accept. It is a paradox which will be manifest in every ethical decision which would actualise love in the human situation.[3]

What is revealed in the life of Christ, however, is not just an insight into the nature of man and an understanding of the law by which that life is fulfilled but also the nature of God who acts in human history to bring it towards the fulfillment of his kingdom. It is God who comes to man in the incarnation and in this respect

---

[1] NDM II, p. 94-5.

[2] ICE, p. 60.

[3] Ibid., p. 111.

Niebuhr speaks of the paradox of Christ.

> The love of Christ, His disinterested and sacrificial agape, as the highest possibility of human existence, stands in paradoxical, rather than contradictory, relation to the majesty of God . . . what Christian faith has always apprehended beyond all metaphysical speculations, [is] the paradoxical relation of a divine agape, which stoops to conquer, and the human agape, which rises above history in a sacrificial act.[1]

The presence of divine love in Christ has, as does Christ's humanity, a two-fold implication for Christian ethical decision. In its negative aspect, this presence reveals that what is required in ethical decision is the perfection of man realised in acts of sacrificial love. This is a perfection which cannot be "a sum total of various virtues or an absence of transgression of various laws," for it is simply "not attainable in history."[2] Here the harshness of Niebuhr's judgement of history can be seen in all its force directed against the pretentiousness of sinful self-assertion. Niebuhr relies on the one hand upon an empirical argument which claims that no such sacrificial love has ever been fully actualised by man in history, except in the life of Christ.

> There is, in short, no problem of history and no point in society from which one may not observe that the same man who touches the fringes of the infinite in his moral life remains imbedded in finiteness, that he increases the evil in his life if he tries to overcome it without regard to his limitations.[3]

---

[1] NDM II, p. 71.

[2] Ibid., p. 68.

[3] ICE, p. 135.

Yet, as Ramsey has pointed out, Niebuhr gains a victory only by saying that what is essential to sacrificial love is heedlessness of self, willingness to suffer for another's good, and the ability to sacrifice one's own well-being for that of another without the calculation of benefits, all of these being features which emphasise the overt character of that love. Ramsey argues:

> The numerical infrequency of self-sacrificial acts open to external view does not necessarily indicate the absence, much less the impossibility, of the motive of self-giving love in the mundane lives of ordinary people, who may not have found in themselves the strength for martyrdom simply because they have not found reason for it or a situation actually calling for it.[1]

In this sense, the force of Niebuhr's polemic against any form of sentimentalism regarding love and against any form of ethic which relies upon the easy accomplishments of love has led him to exaggerate the impossibility of this reconciling love among men.[2]

Yet, in addition to measuring "the facts of history" against the revelation, a comparison which gives

---

[1]Ramsey, op. cit., p. 136.

[2]Ibid. Cf. H. D. Lewis' argument in Freedom and History, the Muirhead Library of Philosophy (Allen and Unwin, Ltd., London, 1962), that Niebuhr makes a parody of human freedom by claiming that man cannot effect the vision of love which he sees as a result of self-transcendence (p. 225-6). See also Ramsey's claim that "Niebuhr's rigid dualism between 'within history' and 'beyond history,' or between what may be true 'in principle' and 'in fact,' may prove more disastrous than all the supposed rigidities of the traditional theory of natural law, since the former places limits upon God's agape and providential redemptive power while the latter only indicates a recalcitrance in the human nature and history which are subject to redemption." Ibid., p. 140.

rise to a certain pessimism on Niebuhr's part, he also asserts that the meaning of that history is to be found in that which transcends it and here the positive effect of the divine presence is to be felt. God's action of love for man in Christ, by which he both reveals the truth about man in his relation to God and makes available the resources for man to live and act meaningfully, becomes the centre of the Christian religious life and the source of moral motivation.

> Just as the Cross symbolizes the meaning of life which stands in contradiction to all conceptions of the "truth," seeking to complete the meaning of history from the inadequate centre of the hopes and ambitions of a particular nation or culture, so also it symbolizes the final goodness which stands in contradiction to all forms of human goodness in which self-assertion and love are compounded.[1]

What is important in coming to understand Christ and the cross is that what is experienced negatively as a judgement against human existence is also known positively as the opening of a new possibility for life in relation to God. Niebuhr can claim that "the invasion of the self from beyond the self is therefore an invasion of both 'wisdom' and 'power,' of both 'truth' and 'grace.'"[2] It is this aspect of Christian ethics which is specifically religious and which constitutes for Niebuhr its superiority over other forms of ethical systems that become hardened and rigid. At the root of the Christian experience is the encounter with a loving God who shows

---

[1] NDM II, p. 89. [2] Ibid., p. 100.

man to himself, reveals the meaning of human existence, and allows the fulfillment of that meaning through continual relationship with Him. In Christ is both "essential humanity undistorted" and "love itself," both the pinnacle of human freedom and the epitome of God's self-giving.[1]

In Christ therefore man becomes related to what is beyond human existence and it is the "comprehension of the dimension of depth in life" which Niebuhr then calls "the distinctive contribution of religion to morality."[2] It is religious faith which perceives this depth and which at the same time becomes committed to a newness of life within history.

> A religious morality is constrained by its sense of a dimension of depth to trace every force with which it deals to some ultimate origin and to relate every purpose to some ultimate end. It is concerned not only with immediate values and disvalues, but with the problem of good and evil, not only with immediate objectives, but with ultimate hopes.[3]

Moral decisions which flow from this perception will strive for the fulfillment of that depth which God reveals and affirms. Indeed one's sense of moral obligation is incorporated into this religious insight by Niebuhr. Morality does not contradict religious faith nor is it identified with that faith.

---

[1] Ramsey, op. cit., p. 147.

[2] ICE, p. 5.

[3] Ibid.

> The dimension of depth in the consciousness of religion creates the tension between what is and what ought to be. It bends the bow from which every arrow of moral action flies. Every truly moral act seeks to establish what ought to be, because the agent feels obligated to the ideal, though historically unrealized, as being the order of life in its more essential reality. Thus the Christian believes that the ideal of love is real in the will and nature of God, even though he knows of no place in history where the ideal has been realized in its pure form. And it is because it has this reality that he feels the pull of obligation. The sense of obligation in morals from which Kant tried to derive the whole structure of religion is really derived from the religion itself. The "pull" or "drive" of moral life is a part of the religious tension of life. Man seeks to realize in history what he conceives to be already the truest reality--that is, its final essence.[1]

The acknowledgement of the transcendent foundation and meaning of life complements man's recognition of human sin for both of these imply a depth of understanding which is beyond what man as a rational or even a moral being can grasp. Yet this transcendent is implicit in man's struggle for freedom and for the realisation of the "ought" in history just as sinfulness is, and it is only on the basis of his knowledge that man, as both finite and free, is loved by God, that Niebuhr can say, "The eternal is involved in every moral judgment."[2]

In the moment of transcending himself and the world towards the vision of an ideal possibility for life, man and God encounter one another and man discovers the "universe of meaning" to which human life is fundamentally

---

[1] Ibid., p. 8-9. Underlines mine.

[2] Ibid., p. 69.

related. This relation is expressed by the fact that human life points beyond itself to a fulfillment which transcends the contingencies of particular historical or cultural circumstances and by the fact that no morality will be adequate to that life which does not rest upon such an ultimate source. What the Christian claims is that the love of Christ is the final norm of human life;[1] agape "is the final norm of a human nature which has no final norm in history because it is not completely contained in history."[2] It is love alone which can serve as an adequate law for the freedom which is characteristic of man; love is thus "the only final structure of freedom."[3] Thus freedom and love correspond to one another as nature and norm, and in this sense Niebuhr accepts a revised version of a natural law theory of ethics.[4]

As we have already suggested, Niebuhr argued that mutual love could be judged to be an adequate norm of life according to a rational assessment of the human situation. Furthermore, evidence of such an assessment,

---

[1]Niebuhr, The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1960), p. 189; hereafter cited as CLCD.

[2]NDM II, p. 75.

[3]Niebuhr, "Christian Faith and Natural Law," Theology (February 1940), p. 89.

[4]Cf. Ramsey, op. cit., p. 117.

he argued, could be found in the moral codes which are in fact adopted by individuals and societies. Thus:

> In spite of the relativity of morals every conceivable moral code and every philosophy of morals enjoins concern for the life and welfare of the other and seeks to restrain the unqualified assertion of the interests of the self against the other.[1]

All forms of morality thus are "grounded in" and "point towards an ultimate perfection in unity and harmony, not realizable in any historic situation."[2] This is more than a matter of offering a definition of morality which is characterised by a separation between what ought to be and what is the case. Rather, Niebuhr considers it evidence for the validity of love as an ethical norm. Not only is it true that "all human life is informed with an inchoate sense of responsibility toward the ultimate law of life--the law of love,"[3] but this law is also "a vision of health which even a sick man may envisage."[4] Against traditional natural law theories, Niebuhr asserted that the law of love is not merely added on to the natural sense of morality which man has nor does it represent an accomplishment of man's reason. Rather, it is that which shows the meaning of the moral quest in which man is naturally involved. Thus, Niebuhr claims,

> men are not completely blinded by self-interest or lost in this maze of historical relativity. What always remains with them is not some

---

[1] ICE, p. 106.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 112.

[4] NDM I, p. 287.

> uncorrupted bit of reason, which gives them universally valid standards of justice. What remains with them is something higher--namely, the law of love, which they dimly recognize as the law of their being, as the structure of human freedom, and which, in Christian faith, Christ clarifies and redefines; which is why He is called the "second Adam."[1]

This dim perception can be recognised in the "proximate principles" by which men live and order their moral lives. These principles, which Niebuhr calls "schemes" of justice, justice, equal justice, equality, freedom and mutual love, indicate an ascending scale of approximation of the law of love, each one of them pointing towards love as the ideal to which they are related as practical or relative solutions.[2]

It is, however, in their descending order that these proximate principles are justified and, as Ramsey has so clearly shown, this is really the way in which Niebuhr has radically revised natural law ethics.[3] What is important about the proximate principles is not that they can be justified by reason but that they are grounded in the law of love and are thus directives which follow from it.

> In other words, since love requires that human life be affirmed, positive freedom to possess the affirmed fruition is the first implication and--in a world of competing claims--equality of opportunity is the second implication drawn from the law of love itself.[4]

---

[1] "Christian Faith and Natural Law," p. 93.

[2] ICE, p. 106-111.

[3] Ramsey, op. cit., p. 122-31.

[4] Ibid., p. 124.

It is here that the dialectic in Niebuhr's thought is obvious. On the one hand, Niebuhr insists that reason continue to perform its duty in moral reasoning by trying "to establish a system of coherence and consistency in conduct as well as in the realm of truth" and further by seeking to formulate laws by which such a discerned unity of meaning can be applied in the world of historical events.[1] Yet such principles are ultimately grounded in the law of love as the ideal possibility for mankind so that, on the other hand, love alone justifies what reason seeks to establish. Niebuhr therefore argues that

> the principles of "natural law" by which justice is defined are, in fact, not so much fixed standards of reason as they are rational efforts to apply the moral obligation, implied in the love commandment, to the complexities of life and the fact of sin.[2]

Thus, as Niebuhr himself claims, "there is a dialectical relation between love and law" such that the precise distinction between them becomes blurred. "The law," Niebuhr claims, "seeks for a tolerable harmony of life with life, sin presupposed. It is, therefore, an approximation of the law of love on the one hand and an instrument of love on the other hand."[3] Niebuhr therefore argues

---

[1] ICE, p. 204-5.

[2] F&H, p. 188.

[3] CRPP, p. 171-2. Cf. Niebuhr's statement in CLCD that the profoundest principles of justice "actually transcend reason and lie rooted in religious conceptions of the meaning of existence" (p. 71).

"the relevance of an impossible ethical ideal" in the following way:

> Love is thus the end term of any system of morals. It is the moral requirement in which all schemes of justice are fulfilled and negated. They are fulfilled because the obligation of life to life is more fully met in love than is possible in any scheme of equity and justice. They are negated because love makes an end of the nicely calculated less and more of structures of justice. It does not carefully arbitrate between the needs of the self and of the other, since it meets the needs of the other without concern for the self.[1]

Thus prophetic religion transcends rational universalism, the former being dynamically related to an ultimate reality which finally transcends any of its rational and moral approximations.

The role of the individual moral agent is therefore to maintain a constant tension between the proximate moral and political principles enforced by a particular society and his freedom to transcend both history and nature to enquire into the meaning of human life. It is this necessity for transcendence which Niebuhr urged in two of his major works on social ethics and it illuminates in a personal way the relationship between religious insight and moral decisions.[2]

> These profound questions about life from the perspective of the individual who is able to see the whole history of his nation (and of all nations for that matter) as a flux in time, imply eternity. Only a consciousness

---

[1] NDM I, p. 295.

[2] Moral Man and Immoral Society and CLCD.

> which transcends time can define and circumscribe the flux of time. The man who searches after both meaning and fulfillments beyond the ambiguous fulfillments and frustrations of history exists in a height of spirit which no historical process can completely contain. This height is not irrelevant to the life of the community, because new richness and a higher possibility of justice come to the community from this height of awareness.[1]

The real hope for the renewal of society and of historical actualities which is expressed by this passage rests on Niebuhr's conviction that "the divine power which bears history can complete what even the highest human striving must leave incomplete, and can purify the corruptions which appear in even the purest human aspirations," and it is this hope which Niebuhr claims to be "an indispensable prerequisite for diligent fulfillment of our historic tasks."[2] The telos of human existence, expressed in the belief that man is made for love, is thus fulfilled in and by the divine presence and, since it has become a reality within man's own history, it becomes the source of moral imperatives directed towards its fulfillment in human life.[3] Religious morality is therefore characterised by faith and hope, for, though it "understands the fragmentary and broken character of all historic achievements," yet it "has confidence in their meaning." The source of this confidence is the knowledge

---

[1] CLCD, p. 84-5.

[2] Ibid., p. 189.

[3] Cf. George A Lindbeck, "Revelation, Natural Law, and the Thought of Reinhold Niebuhr," Natural Law Forum, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1959), p. 149.

that their completion is "in the hands of a Divine Power, whose resources are greater than those of men, and whose suffering love can overcome the corruptions of man's achievements, without negating the significance of our striving."[1]

---

[1] CLCD, p. 189-90.

CHAPTER VIII

EXISTENTIAL ETHICS

The existentialist ethic of Rudolf Bultmann represents a very interesting style of thinking about the relationship between indicative and imperative in Christian ethical decision, not the least because he deals with this issue in a quite explicit way throughout his writings. The context of Bultmann's ethic is provided by an anthropological analysis in which he uses the categories of contemporary existentialist philosophy, particularly that of Heidegger. Unlike Niebuhr, whose anthropological assertions are the result of an extensive analysis and critique of intellectual and cultural history, Bultmann's understanding is derived from a Daseinsanalyse for which the most basic element is man-in-particular or man-in-situation. The conclusions of this analysis, particularly with regard to the distinction between the ontological structure of human existence and its ontic situation, will make clear the first set of indicatives which are important to the understanding of ethical decision Bultmann develops. Secondly, however, Bultmann's ethic is set in the context of a disciplined and thorough biblical exegesis and this further distinguishes his thought from that of the others

we have so far examined. It is in the context of the biblical kerygma and in the struggle to understand this witness in the contemporary world that Bultmann analyses the character of religious claims regarding the action of God in the world. A study of his demythologising project will be important in determining what role historical indicatives play in his understanding of ethical imperatives. Finally an examination of ethical decision-making both as "radical obedience" and as the appropriation of a "new self-understanding" will be important since the relationship between God and man implied by Bultmann's analysis continues to be one of the more problematic elements in his theology.

Bultmann's anthropology consists of a twofold observation regarding the nature of man and these observations furnish the background and the fundamental categories for his description of ethical decision-making. On the one hand, man can be understood as having an ontological structure which defines his possibilities for being in the world and thus which characterises the particularly human way of being. Fundamentally the ontological structure of human existence is defined as possibility; man's being is a possibility of being. As such, Bultmann claims that there are basically two ways of choosing with regard to one's existence in the world, and man is a creature who stands before these two alternatives. It is only by decision that his being in the world will be determined. Thus, Bultmann claims that

man's existence

> is never to be found in the present as a fulfilled reality, but always lies ahead of him. In other words, his existence is always an intention and a quest, and in it he may find himself or lose his grip upon himself, gain his self or fail to do so.[1]

Because human existence is never a fully present reality, man lives by projecting himself into the future towards his existence. "Living is always a 'walking'" in which man lives "for" or "to" something, the content of which is determined by concrete decisions.[2] Here also we find the initial clue to Bultmann's understanding of authentic existence in which man intends and acts so as to keep his possibilities for existence open and thus maintain his genuine selfhood. The character of life as openness towards an as yet undetermined future can either be appropriated or be denied in man's choosing and these two possibilities are the background against which man's concrete, historical decisions are set.

The presence of these possibilities to man can be seen by an examination of three Pauline terms which are used to characterise man's existence. The most comprehensive of these, Bultmann claims, is soma, indicative of man's being in the world as a body. Man's body belongs to his very essence so that man himself can be denoted as

---

[1]Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, transl. by Kendrick Grobel, Vol. I (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1951; Vol. II, 1955), p. 227; hereafter cited as TNT I or II.

[2]Ibid., p. 210.

a whole person by the term soma. What man's bodily existence signifies in terms of his ontological structure is that man is a being who is "able to make himself the object of his own action or to experience himself as the subject to whom something happens."[1] This experience of knowing oneself as both the subject and object of action implies for Bultmann that man is capable of having a relationship to himself, a relationship which it is the unique contribution of his bodily existence to make present to him.

> He can be called soma, that is, as having a relationship to himself--as being able in a certain sense to distinguish himself from himself. Or, more exactly, he is so called as that self from whom he, as subject, distinguishes himself, the self with whom he can deal as the object of his own conduct, and also the self whom he can perceive as subjected to an occurrence that springs from a will other than his own. It is as such a self that man is called soma.[2]

As soma therefore man faces different alternatives with respect to knowing himself as subject or object and these alternatives are realised in concrete decisions. Man can also be characterised as pneuma or psyche, both of which signify the presence to man of an inner self, a self which knows itself to be the subject of its own willing and doing.[3] These phenomena of spirit and soul do not, for Bultmann, indicate the presence in man of "some higher principle . . . or some special intellectual or spiritual

---

[1] Ibid., p. 195.

[2] Ibid., p. 196.

[3] Ibid., p. 203.

faculty of his" but rather specify another way in which man knows himself as a particular being.[1] Man can be described therefore as "a striving, willing, purposing self," a self which has intentions and commitments and which can decide courses of action and thus engage in goal-directed activity. These three anthropological terms signify for Bultmann what is "the specifically human state of being alive" and through each of them, man experiences the alternatives with respect to which his particular and unique self will be defined.[2] Thus,

> The various possibilities of regarding man, or the self, come to light in the use of the anthropological terms soma, psyche, and pneuma. Man does not consist of two parts, much less of three; nor are psyche and pneuma special faculties or principles (within the soma) of a mental life higher than his animal life. Rather, man is a living unity. He is a person who can become an object to himself. He is a person having a relationship to himself (soma). He is a person who lives in his intentionality, his pursuit of some purpose, his willing and knowing (psyche, pneuma).[3]

Bultmann claims that the fact of having certain ontological possibilities is itself ethically neutral; it is simply the case that man's existence is so characterised. Thus, "the fact that he is soma is in itself neither good nor bad";[4] neither is the fact that man is an intentional or willing self good or bad. These characteristics of man's existence merely indicate the formal

---

[1] Ibid., p. 206.

[2] Ibid., p. 205.

[3] Ibid., p. 209.

[4] Ibid., p. 198.

possibilities of human life.

> This state of living toward some goal, having some attitude, willing something and knowing something, belongs to man's very nature and in itself is neither good nor bad. The goal toward which one's life is oriented is left still undetermined in the mere ontological structure of having some orientation or other; but this structure (which for Paul is, of course, the gift of the life-giving Creator) offers the possibility of choosing one's goal, of deciding for good or evil, for or against God.[1]

What Bultmann claims to be doing therefore is simply indicating the "horizons" of human possibilities, or, as Macquarrie has put it, Bultmann is describing the "limits within which every individual existence must fall."[2] Man is a being who, in terms of ontological structure at least, is basically undetermined and to examine this structure is merely to show the "formal, neutral possibilities" which man is capable of taking in any direction he chooses.[3]

Yet the content of these alternatives is clearly not neutral for Bultmann, for one of them is considered good and the other evil. In considering the ontological structure of human existence, therefore, the choice between good and evil is the choice between alternative ways of being in the world and, further, of alternative

---

[1] Ibid., p. 209.

[2] John Macquarrie, An Existentialist Theology: A Comparison of Heidegger and Bultmann (Harper and Row, New York, 1965), p. 34.

[3] TNT I, p. 212.

ways of relating oneself with God. Thus Bultmann can claim with regard to man's bodily existence that "Since it belongs to man's nature to have such a relationship to himself, a double possibility exists: to be at one with himself or at odds (estranged from himself)."[1] Man's relationship to himself can either be "an appropriate one" in which he is in control of his own intentions and actions or it can be a "perverted one" in which man loses his free possibilities, or loses "his grip on himself" by being mastered by another power. What characterises man's existence as a neutral fact, namely his responsibility for his own choices and his determination of the way he will walk into the future, yet implies that one way of walking will clearly maintain man's ability to direct his own life and the other will take that freedom and responsibility away. Indeed it is, for Bultmann, man's ability to judge or to understand the character of his life which determines these alternatives as good or evil. As the term nous makes clear, man's self is also a conscious volition,

> [an] understanding will with the alternative of being for God or against Him. Man's volition is not an instinctive striving but is an understanding act of will which is always an "evaluating" act and therefore necessarily moves in the sphere of decisions between good and evil.[2]

It would seem therefore that the result of such an assessment of the possibilities present to man in his ontological

---

[1] Ibid., p. 196. [2] Ibid., p. 213.

structure which is carried out by man's mind is that these possibilities are considered to be authentic or inauthentic, good or evil. Yet, Bultmann claims that the aim of the nous, or man's self which is the subject of his willing, is innately to do what is right. Thus, "It belongs to the nature of man (i.e. to his ontological structure) to desire 'what is good,' inasmuch as this good is nothing other than 'life' itself."[1] Characteristic of man's ontological structure is therefore not only the presence to him of alternatives, but furthermore the natural fact, or even natural necessity, that man fundamentally intends to find life, to affirm himself, to do that which is good. Since he wants to maintain the importance of these possibilities and of man's responsibility for taking up one or the other of them, Bultmann speaks of this desire for the good as a hidden tendency, or an innate desire, expressed as the innermost desires of the heart. "The willing of the 'good' . . . is the self's innermost tendency which is covered up and hidden by the conscious desires which bring forth deeds"; or again, "what he wills at heart, an intention which can be perverted in his concrete will . . ." is to find authentic existence.[2] Thus, "because [man] must first find his life (that which is 'good'--meaning the existence that at heart he wants), this existence comes to have for him the character of the 'good'--in the

---

[1] Ibid., p. 212.

[2] Ibid., p. 224.

sense of that which is required of him."[1]

On the other hand, man can be described as he really is in the world, that is, in terms of his ontic situation, as one who has already decided, already chosen, and has thus determined his life according to one of the possibilities originally open to him. Again, Bultmann uses Pauline terms to indicate the nature of man's ontic situation and these attest to the fact that "Man has always already missed the existence that at heart he seeks . . . "[2] Sarx, in addition to being a neutral term designating "man's material corporeality," signifies the sphere in which a man moves or the standards by which he makes decisions in the world. To be "in the flesh" is thus natural to human life, but to act "according to the flesh" is to walk in a way which is inauthentic and which ultimately will lead to one's loss of power over oneself. The man who is characterised ontologically as being a soma and therefore as having a relationship to himself is known ontically as one who continually allows that somatic existence to be ruled by sarx and who thus can no longer get hold of his original possibilities. To live according to the flesh, kata sarka, is to adopt an attitude towards one's existence

---

[1] Ibid., p. 227. This is expressed in the Johannine literature also in the assumption that "man's life is pervaded by the quest for reality (aletheia), the quest for life." Thus "it is presupposed [by John] that man does know of light (in general) and is in quest of it." TNT II, p. 26.

[2] Ibid.

in which the standard of judgement is that which is external, earthly, and transitory.[1] For Bultmann, this attitude results in self-delusion since it is based upon an erroneous judgement as to the character of life. Whereas the judgement which is appropriate is that the flesh denotes the sphere of man's natural earthly life and as such indicates the realm in which man's decisions are to be made, the judgement which is in fact made by man is that this sphere should become "the determinative norm" for his life.[2] To put one's confidence in the flesh as a principle upon which to act results for Bultmann in boasting and pride in man's own external deeds or accomplishments and in fear or anxiety. It is fear or care which motivates man to run from the possibilities open to him and to protect himself against a future which is unknown and undetermined, and, once one chooses to let sarx become the deciding factor in one's decisions, this anxiety continues to characterise man's ontic situation as a vicious circle from which there is no escape. What begins therefore as a genuine willing to lay hold of life becomes perverted and, instead of being directed outward towards others and towards his own genuine future, man's will turns inward upon himself and his need to secure the foundation for his own life.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 237-8. Cf. Macquarrie, op. cit., "The flesh is to be understood as a way of being, not a substance" (p. 106).

[2] Ibid., p. 239.

Bultmann can then describe man's ontic existence as an alienation or an estrangement in which man is not only separated from his original possibilities but has also become the victim of external powers which, though they were dependent originally upon man's choosing them for their power, have now passed out of his control altogether. Thus sarx and hamartia become "powers to which man has fallen victim and against which he is powerless. The personification of these powers expresses the fact that man has lost to them the capacity to be the subject of his own action."[1] Man becomes unable to make his original and natural intention to do good effective in his actual situation, even though this inclination stays with him as the only remainder of his authentic life. Thus man is divided against himself; he is inwardly split.

> Man fails to achieve [his selfhood] by attempting self-reliantly to realize it in "desire." In this false will toward self-hood man's destination to be a self--his will toward "life"--is pervertedly preserved; that is just the reason why it is possible to describe human existence as the struggle between "self" and "self" within a man.[2]

This split is also signified by the distinction between willing and doing, between the way a man intends to live his life and the deeds which he performs to bring about

---

[1] Ibid., p. 245. This is the real significance for Bultmann of Paul's claim in Romans 7.17 that " . . . it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me." Quotations are from the Revised Standard Version, Bible, ed. by H. G. May and B. M. Metzger (Oxford University Press, New York, 1962).

[2] Ibid., p. 246.

that intention. Whereas man "in all his doing . . . acts because in all his doing he intends to achieve his authenticity" and thus to lay hold of the object of his willing, life, the result of his doing is not life but a loss of selfhood.[1] Therefore,

> It is precisely through his willing to be himself that man fails to find the authenticity that he wills to achieve . . . But just because the will to be authentic is preserved in the false will to be onself, even if only disguisedly and distortedly, it is possible so to speak of the split in man's existence that the authentic I is set over against the factual one.[2]

Man's actual condition in the world can thus be described as one of alienation or of fallenness in which man has not retained his ability to choose between alternative ways of being and can no longer effect his desire for authentic life.

It is necessary, however, to speak of God when speaking of man for, according to Christian affirmations about human life, it is God who is the Creator of that life, who gives it the possibilities for authentic and inauthentic modes of existence, and who affirms the authentic as his own true intention for human life. Thus, Bultmann says that the choice between good and evil

---

[1]Bultmann, "Romans 7 and the Anthropology of Paul," Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann, selected and translated by Schubert Ogden (World Publishing Co., New York, 1960), p. 152; hereafter cited as E&F.

[2]Ibid., p. 156.

is also the choice to be for or against God.[1] Man is constantly one who is "placed before God. The ontological possibility of being good or evil is simultaneously the ontic possibility of having a relationship to God . . . "[2] This relationship to God is expressed in the term anthropos, which means "man in his creaturely humanity, and that means also man in his relation to God."[3] As the Creator of life, God both affirms and demands life and, for Bultmann, it is God's claim upon man that requires of him that he also choose life. This means, in terms of the ontological structure of human life, that man ought to choose authentic selfhood, which is at the same time a selfhood that can remain open to its own future since it is open to God; and it means, in terms of the ontic situation of human existence, that man, in choosing to secure himself against his own future, has missed authentic life, and that is at the same time to have sinned against God's intention.

> Because man is a self who is concerned with his authenticity and can find it (as that of a creature) only when he surrenders himself to the claim of God, there is the possibility of sin. Because from the beginning the claim of God has to do with man's authentic existence, there is the possibility of misunderstanding: the man who is called to authenticity falsely wills to be himself.[4]

---

[1] TNT I, p. 209.

[2] Ibid., p. 228.

[3] Ibid., p. 231. Underlines mine.

[4] E&F, p. 157.

To talk of man as a creature before God is to talk of man faced with two alternative ways of life, one of which would fulfill man's own real intention which is God's will for human life, and the other of which would be falsehood as well as disobedience.

It is important at this point to examine carefully the nature of this relationship between the understanding of man derived from Daseinsanalyse and that which involves specifically religious claims, for it is here that the special features of Bultmann's understanding of Christian ethical decision become clear. On the one hand, Bultmann believed in the usefulness of a philosophy of existence in so far as it illuminated the possibilities and the limits of human life. It is by an ontological analysis that the two fundamental alternatives become clear and man can be seen as one who lives within these choices by decision. Thus the philosophical analysis precedes the work of exegesis and the one who sets out to explain the meaning of religious claims ought first to make clear the presuppositions from which he interprets these claims.[1] It is existentialist philosophy which Bultmann believed could offer the most adequate framework for such interpretation.

---

[1] Jesus Christ and Mythology (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1958), p. 48, 54-5; hereafter cited as JC&M. Cf. Essays Philosophical and Theological, transl. by J. C. G. Greig (SCM Press, London, 1955), p. 234f.

> Existentialist philosophy tries to show what it means to exist by distinguishing between man's being as "existence" and the being of all worldly beings which are not "existing" but only "extant" (vorhanden) . . . It may be enough to say that existentialist philosophy shows human existence to be true only in the act of existing. Existentialist philosophy is far from pretending that it secures for man a self-understanding of his own personal existence . . . [for it] makes personal existence my own personal responsibility . . .[1]

Yet Bultmann on the other hand acknowledges the limits of such an understanding of human existence and thus only accepts such an analysis for its formal description of the structures of that existence.[2] Thus existentialist philosophy does not furnish us with "an ideal pattern of human existence" but merely describes the phenomenon of existence.[3]

> Existentialist philosophy does not say to me "in such and such a way you must exist"; it says only "you must exist"; or, since even this claim may be too large, it shows me what it means to exist.[4]

Bultmann claims therefore that a philosophy of existence, while furnishing a framework within which to discuss the meaning and implications of religious claims, does not entail any set of concrete demands upon the one who engages in an analysis of that existence, either in terms

---

[1] Ibid., p. 56.

[2] Macquarrie, "Philosophy and Theology in Bultmann's Thought," in Charles W. Kegley, ed., The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann (SCM Press, London, 1966), p. 129-30.

[3] JC&M, p. 55, 57.

[4] Ibid., p. 55.

of specific beliefs about the quality of that existence or in terms of actions which might realise or fulfill that existence. Thus he claims

> that there will never be a right philosophy in the sense of an absolutely perfect system, a philosophy which could give answers to all questions and clear up all riddles of human existence. Our question is simply which philosophy today offers the most adequate perspective and conceptions for understanding human existence.[1]

Here Bultmann reveals himself as the theologian whose major concern is an understanding of the biblical revelation of God and its claims regarding the nature of human existence and it is for just this reason that a philosopher like Jaspers can argue that Bultmann only uses philosophy as propaedeutic to theology.[2]

Behind Bultmann's use of philosophy seems to be the presupposition that it is the task of philosophy to analyse or to describe and that any decisions regarding a personal way of life cannot be given or entailed by such a description. One therefore does not make choices on the basis of Daseinsanalyse for it "does not claim to instruct me about my personal self-understanding."[3] It is just here that religious claims are of significance for it is Bultmann's contention that religious statements

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] Macquarrie, "Philosophy and Theology in Bultmann's Thought," p. 139. See also Karl Jaspers, The Perennial Scope of Philosophy, transl. by Ralph Manheim (Philosophical Library, New York, 1949).

[3] JC&M, p. 58.

are kerygma, by which he means personal address or challenge, and it is kerygma which makes plain one's relationship to God and the demands which such a relationship involves. Therefore, he argues:

> The purely formal analysis of existence does not take into account the relation between man and God, because it does not take into account the concrete events of the personal life, the concrete encounters which constitute personal existence . . . this analysis unveils a sphere which faith alone can understand as the sphere of the relation between man and God.[1]

For Bultmann, as Macquarrie has argued, "Theology cannot be absorbed into philosophy because it knows and proclaims what God has done about that human situation which philosophy can only analyze."[2] The philosophical description of existence is therefore neutral since this relationship with God has been eliminated, the result of the elimination being that "My personal relation with God can be made real by God only, by the acting God who meets me in His Word."[3] Bultmann's description of the ontological structure and the ontic situation of man is important since it shows us the meaning of religious proclamations thereby indicating that the real source of moral imperatives is not to be found in an analysis of human existence alone but in God's affirmations and intentions regarding that existence.

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] Macquarrie, op. cit., p. 131.

[3] JC&M, p. 59.

That religious claims require such an interpretation in terms of personal existence is the major premise upon which Bultmann's demythologising program is built and it is by this method that he intends to examine the character of the divine-human relationship upon which ethical decisions in human life are to be founded. Demythologising makes two important presuppositions regarding the actions of God which are to serve as the basis for moral decision, one of them negative and the other positive, and it is important that we examine each of these as they pose special problems to Bultmann's assertions regarding the nature of those decisions. Negatively, demythologisation presupposes that to speak of God and his action in objective, mythological terms can lead to a real misunderstanding of the meaning of those actions and can put a stumbling block in the way of any modern-day understanding and acceptance of the reality and significance of these actions. Mythological language, much of which is used in the biblical witness to the activity of God, speaks about divine actions as objective phenomena in this world.

> It speaks of gods who represent the power beyond the visible, comprehensible world. It speaks of gods as if they were men and of their actions as human actions, although it conceives of the gods as endowed with superhuman power and of their actions as incalculable, as capable of breaking the normal, ordinary order of events. It may be said that myths give to the transcendent reality an immanent, this-worldly objectivity. Myths give worldly objectivity to that which is unworldly.[1]

[1] Ibid., p. 19.

The problem with myth is not only its attempt to comprehend divine action in terms of human reality but more specifically its failure to offer any kind of reasonable explanation of this activity in the modern world. In so far as the natural world is concerned, Bultmann considers the victory of scientific thinking to be so complete that we cannot make sense of any kind of break in the causal nexus. Thus, he claims, "In this modern conception of the world the cause-and-effect nexus is fundamental . . . modern science does not believe that the course of nature can be interrupted or, so to speak, perforated, by supernatural powers."[1] The same is true apparently for our understanding of history in which, Bultmann claims, "nothing happens without rational motivations."[2] For the modern Christian therefore there must be another way in which to understand the action of God in the historical figure, Jesus Christ, and his promise to bring in the Kingdom of God. This new way will hopefully not offend the rational mind of modern man but will open up the deeper meaning of mythological religious claims.

The positive presupposition of demythologising is therefore that behind these objective descriptions of God's activity is an understanding of human life in relation to God which the writer is attempting to express by using mythological language.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 15. Cf. p. 60-1.

[2] Ibid., p. 16.

> Myths express the knowledge that man is not master of the world and of his life, that the world within which he lives is full of riddles and mysteries and that human life also is full of riddles and mysteries. Mythology expresses a certain understanding of human existence. It believes that the world and human life have their ground and their limits in a power which is beyond all that we can calculate or control.[1]

The deeper meaning of language which describes God's action in objective terms is thus to express what is really a subjective phenomenon, namely man's dependence upon God. To demythologise therefore means to strip away the ancient view of the world which is presupposed by the biblical witness to God's activity and to understand these claims as personal address intended not only to challenge one's understanding of oneself in relation to God but also to demand a response to God's will.

It is Bultmann's intention therefore to make clear the existential meaning of religious claims and in this way to understand the nature of religious belief and religious morality. Bultmann maintains that statements about God's action must be understood analogically on the basis of our understanding of interpersonal relationships between human beings.

> How, then, must we speak of God as acting if our speech is not to be understood as mythological speech? God as acting does not refer to an event which can be perceived by me without myself being drawn into the event as into God's action, without myself taking part in it as being acted upon. In other words, to speak

---

[1] Ibid., p. 19.

> of God as acting involves the events of personal existence . . . When we speak of God as acting, we mean that we are confronted with God, addressed, asked, judged, or blessed by God.[1]

In one sense therefore we do not understand God at all unless we understand his relationship to us or what he means for our lives and there seem to be at least two reasons for this in Bultmann's thought. On the one hand, religious language cannot be an impersonal or objective reporting of events which the hearer can treat in a neutral fashion without involving his own beliefs and commitments. Thus,

> The affirmation that God is creator cannot be a theoretical statement about God as creator mundi in a general sense. The affirmation can only be a personal confession that I understand myself to be a creature which owes its existence to God. It cannot be made as a neutral statement, but only as thanksgiving and surrender.[2]

This is true also of the words of Jesus which Bultmann claims must be understood as full of existential meaning.

> When we encounter the words of Jesus in history, we do not judge them by a philosophical system with reference to their rational validity; they meet us with the question of how we are to interpret our own existence.[3]

Language about God and his action is therefore, for Bultmann, self-involving since it both expresses the self-understanding of the speaker in his relation to God and demands of the hearer a response involving his intentions and opinions.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 68. Underlines mine.

[2] Ibid., p. 69.

[3] Jesus and the Word, transl. by L. P. Smith and E. H. Lantero (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1958),

However, the second reason goes even further than this, for Bultmann goes on to maintain that we can only speak of God in terms of his significance for us. We cannot deal with God "as He is in Himself but only with God as He is significant for man, for man's responsibility and man's salvation."[1] Thus Bultmann can claim in his interpretation of Pauline theology that we can understand this theology best if it is treated as "his doctrine of man."[2]

> Every assertion about God is simultaneously an assertion about man and vice versa. For this reason and in this sense Paul's theology is, at the same time, anthropology.[3]

This seems also to be the presupposition of Bultmann's understanding of natural knowledge of God and of the moral demand and it is here that the question of the autonomous character of his ethic arises. He claims that "Man does have in advance a relation to God," and quotes Augustine in support of this claim.

> Man has a knowledge of God in advance, though not of the revelation of God, that is, of His action in Christ. He has a relation to God in his search for God, conscious or unconscious. Man's life is moved by the search for God because it is always moved, consciously or unconsciously, by the question about his own personal existence. The question of God and the question of myself are identical.[4]

---

p. 11; hereafter cited as J&W.

[1] TNT I, p. 191.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] JC&M, p. 53.

This preunderstanding of God, which is independent of the Christian faith specifically, seems to be present to man in his own struggle to find himself, to find authentic life. That each man knows himself to be separated from what he ought to be is the purpose of Daseinsanalyse to show. However, is that knowledge of one's ontic situation in contrast to the ontological structure of human life the same as or identical with knowledge of God's demand? Bultmann here seems to be caught on his own presuppositions for there is simply no way to speak about God's demand except in terms of its existential meaning and it is thus difficult if not impossible to explain how an understanding of oneself is different from an understanding of God. As Oden has suggested, Bultmann makes two assertions which must be held in contrast with his claim above: "(a) the object of man's self-knowledge is not God and (b) . . . such self-knowledge leads to an impasse which only the revelation of God can illumine."[1] It is Oden's belief, after a perceptive analysis of this relationship in Bultmann's thought, that this is a paradoxical though not a self-contradictory relationship.

> As the ontology of man may be existentially analyzed by adequate philosophy, it may be seen that every man knows himself to be under requirement: to be who he ought to be, to become an authentic self. The theologian sees the demand of God as none other than authentic selfhood. Thus man as such has a

---

[1]Thomas C. Oden, Radical Obedience: The Ethics of Rudolf Bultmann (Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1964), p. 62.

> certain kind of knowledge of God in that he knows himself to be under this requirement. But in his ontic situation, he has always already lost the possibility of becoming who he ought to be. The ontic possibility for authentic life is given only in the address of the Christian proclamation.[1]

In attempting to understand human life we are therefore involved in understanding God at the same time; yet there are specific historical events in which God reveals himself to man by showing man to himself and by giving him the power to become what he truly is.

It is time therefore to examine those historical events which for Bultmann are significant in that God makes himself present to man and acts in his behalf and in that they furnish indicatives upon which ethical imperatives regarding the actions of the believer are based. Since it is the case that we cannot speak of the action of God in any objective sense but only in terms of his relation to human existence, Bultmann holds the same to be true of historical indicatives in which God's action is described. Bultmann's understanding of history has been another very problematic aspect of his thought and it is important to his characterisation of ethical decision in so far as it shows us what he considered to

---

[1] Ibid., p. 64. Cf. H. P. Owen, "Revelation," in Kegley, op. cit. "[Bultmann] certainly does not wish to identify revelation with self-awareness. Rather he says that self-awareness is the human element in revelation. In this he is surely right. The believer cannot regard God with the detached, theoretical, interest with which the physicist regards an atom. To know God is to know onself as the object of his providential and redemptive care" (p. 49).

be the essential elements of God's revelation of himself in the Christ-event. The view of history which is decisive for Bultmann's interpretation of the New Testament is, as Macquarrie has argued, a view in which the possibilities of human existence for authentic or inauthentic life are crucial. Therefore, for Bultmann,

> historical study is concerned not so much with facts as with possibility, for man himself is the primary historical, and his existence is constituted by possibility. We study man as he has been in order to know what the possibilities of his Being are. But we can study man as he has been only because we ourselves are men and are historical in our Being. To understand the possibilities of history is at the same time to have our own possibilities disclosed to us.[1]

What is important as the Christian seeks to understand events of the past in which God has revealed himself is that he become engaged, not as an observer who can remain neutral to the facts he uncovers, but as one whose own possibilities and self-understanding are at stake. We could perhaps fix the dates and places of historical events and in this sense history maintains some kind of objectivity (Historie); but the meaning of historical events is what is important (Geschichte), and this can only be known by one who is prepared to engage in a kind of dialogue with it.[2] The events of Jesus' life, in which Bultmann took little factual interest, are really understood when we encounter them with our own

---

[1]Macquarrie, op. cit., p. 135.

[2]J&W, p. 6.

existential problems and find in them both demands and solutions by which our own historical existence can become meaningful.[1]

> We do not stand outside historical forces as neutral observers; we are ourselves moved by them; and only when we are ready to listen to the demand which history makes on us do we understand at all what history is about. This dialogue is no clever exercise of subjectivity on the observer's part, but a real interrogating of history, in the course of which the historian puts this subjectivity of his in question, and is ready to listen to history as an authority.[2]

In this sense, it is correct to say that Bultmann somewhat "brackets" the question of historical factuality and makes the threat of subjectivity more likely.[3]

What is crucial about God's revelation of himself in Christ and what is important for anyone who examines the life of Christ to understand, is that what occurs here is the restoration of the possibility for authentic life which man in his ontic situation has lost.

---

[1]In this respect Bultmann followed the conclusions of A. Schweitzer that nothing could be known of the biography of Jesus except his preaching of the coming eschaton. See The Quest of the Historical Jesus (Macmillan, New York, 1968), especially Chapters 19 and 20. Cf. also the introduction to J&W. For this reason, Paul's preaching is considered by Bultmann to hold the real clues as to the nature of Christian life and ethics, particularly since his self-understanding before and after faith is expressed so vividly in his letters.

[2]Ibid., p. 4.

[3]See Owen, op. cit., p. 50. Against Bultmann's understanding of history he writes: "The historical nature of [God's] revelation demands that we accept historical knowledge (with all its particular uncertainties) as one among the many elements that constitute the total evidence for faith." Cf. Macquarrie, op. cit., p. 141. "But can the question of historical factuality be simply bracketed, so that the theological question and the questions of historical research have nothing whatever to do with each other?"

> This, then, is the decisive thing which distinguishes the New Testament from philosophy and the Christian faith from a "natural" understanding of existence: the New Testament speaks about and the Christian faith knows about a deed of God which first makes possible man's self-surrender (Hingabe), his faith, his love--in short, his authentic life.[1]

Since man, as we have seen, has in his ontic situation projected his possibilities onto an alien power which now controls his choices, he suffers a loss of self and a loss of any capacity for authentic decision. It is thus only by a "mighty act of God" that man can be restored to himself again and this means once again to find the original possibilities of his existence open to him and requiring his decision. The act of God in Christ is primarily an act of grace.

> Grace is the event in which God restores to me and places within my grasp my lost possibility of authentic being, that is to say, the being which God intended in creation and from which man has fallen away in sin. Such grace is an act of forgiveness which delivers from past guilt and breaks the power of sin over human life.[2]

This breaking of the power of sin occurs in history as Christ's death and resurrection for it is this event which is the eschatological deed of salvation. God's grace, for Bultmann, is a "single deed" and "consists in the fact that He gave Christ up to die--to die as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of men."[3] This death

---

[1] Kerygma and Myth, ed. by H. W. Bartsch, transl. by R. H. Fuller (Harper and Row, New York, 1961), p. 33. Underlines mine.

[2] Macquarrie, An Existentialist Theology, p. 154.

[3] TNT I, p. 289.

and the resurrection "are bound together in the unity of one salvation-occurrence,"[1] and it is this event of salvation which, Bultmann claims, "is naught else than the realization of that destined goal of 'life' and selfhood which are God's will for man and man's own real intention, but which were perverted under sin."[2] It is this event which becomes the basis for Christian ethical decision.

Since, as we have already suggested, historical events take on significance only when they are viewed as expressing a certain understanding of human existence and since God reveals himself to man only in his relation to that existence, this salvation-occurrence is to be understood in terms of the "new possibility" which is thereby created for human life in the world. Since man's ontic situation in the world is characterised both by estrangement from his own true self and by domination of the power of sin, it is God alone who can put right the relationship of man with himself and with his Creator. By making this righteousness a "present reality," God has created the conditions for receiving salvation or "life" and thus offers to man the possibility of achieving the life he has wanted but failed to obtain.[3] Bultmann claims that, "Righteousness does not mean any quality at all, but a relationship,"[4] a relationship which is possible now due

---

[1] Ibid., p. 293.

[2] Ibid., p. 269.

[3] Ibid., p. 270.

[4] Ibid., p. 272.

to God's judgement that man is to be "acknowledged innocent," "pronounced righteous," and "given a favourable standing" before God.[1] This act of rightwising by which the power of sin is broken by God's verdict is also represented by the term "reconciliation." This action is to be understood, Bultmann claims, both as an event in history and as a "new situation which God Himself has opened up to man."[2] Reconciliation is conferred "not by [God's] removing their subjective resentment toward Him but by removing the objective state of enmity which, in consequence of sins, existed between Him and men."[3] Consistent with the demands of demythologising, this event cannot be treated or spoken about in a neutral manner but must be proclaimed in preaching. It is kerygma, or "the proclaiming, accosting, demanding, and promising word of preaching," which makes present God's historical action by proclaiming what has occurred and by demanding a response to the occurrence on the part of its hearers.[4]

For Bultmann, the relationship of indicative and imperative in the Christian ethic is seen most clearly in his description of proclamation and of the faith which responds to it in obedience. On the one hand this kerygma is constituted by a claim that something has occurred and that something is therefore true of human existence. This

---

[1] See Romans 2.13, 3.4, and 9.28.

[2] TNT I, p. 285.

[3] Ibid., p. 287.

[4] Ibid., p. 302.

claim consists of statements regarding God's action in Christ and the present reality of a new possibility for authentic human life. The faith which responds to this claim is knowledge or pistis eis, "belief in" what God has done for man. The importance of such knowledge can be seen in Paul's understanding of his apostleship as bringing "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."[1] For Bultmann it is knowledge which accepts the indicatives upon which ethical decision is then founded. Knowledge means accepting as true the fact that new life is present in Christ and is therefore "knowledge of the mysteries of the history of salvation or of the eschatological occurrence (Rom. 11:25; I Cor. 2:7; 15:51)."[2] Bultmann sees in knowledge an act of acknowledgement, or a confession by which "the believer turns away from himself" and concentrates his attention on the "object of his faith."[3] To hear the kerygma is thus to hear the events of God's loving act of reconciliation and to respond in faith is to acknowledge that these things are so. Belief is therefore constituted by "willingness to consider true (= believe) the facts reported of the pre-existent Son of God--incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection from the dead--and to see in them a demonstration of the grace of God."[4] Thus far

[1] See II Corinthians 4.6. Cf. 2.14.

[2] TNT I, p. 327. Cf. TNT II, p. 73-4.

[3] Ibid., p. 319.

[4] Ibid., p. 300. Cf. Bultmann and A. Weiser,

Bultmann's understanding of the knowledge of faith corresponds fairly closely with Evans' description of the verdictive element in parabolic onlooks. For a judgement is called for on the part of those who hear the kerygma, a judgement which asserts not only that something has taken place but also that it is a certain kind of event, namely one in which the grace of God is enacted.[1]

The kerygma is also present to its hearers, however, as demand and this constitutes the imperative element of proclamation. If what is proclaimed is the presence of a new possibility for man and one which lies altogether outside his own power to effect, then the demand is first and most fundamentally for obedience to the God who has so acted. The kerygma must thrust man into genuine decision regarding his life and this means a decision to be f o r or against authentic life in obedience to the Creator. Faith which responds to this proclamation is thus characterised also by commitment, by a transformation of the believer's existence from the old to the new creation.

> "Faith," that is, also has, on the other hand, "undogmatic" character insofar as the word of proclamation is no mere report about historical incidents: It is no teaching about external matters which could simply be regarded as true

---

Faith, Kittel's Bible Key Words, transl. D. M. Barton (A. & C. Black, London, 1961), p. 70-1, 87-8.

[1]Evans, op. cit., p. 133-4. See above, p. 146-7.

> without any transformation of the hearer's own existence.[1]

What constitutes the transition from inauthentic to authentic life is therefore a decision to accept the new possibility for life in "radical obedience" and to commit oneself to the actions of love which allow that life to be fulfilled in the world. Indeed this commitment is already present throughout the understanding of faith as knowledge, for to know the act of grace in which God reconciles man to himself is to know also the will of God, or to have a grasp of ethical duties.[2] Knowledge of this will does not, however, imply, as it does for Brunner, that one's life is henceforth to be determined by God's imperatives. Rather, for Bultmann, it means that a person sees his own authentic life demanding his conformity and allowing for the first time the real possibility of living it in the present.[3] It is in obedience to this demand for authentic life that the Christian way of life is actualised.

For Bultmann, these two aspects of the kerygma and of the faith which responds to it are the indicative and imperative existing in dialectical tension with one another. In the very important section of his Theology of the New Testament devoted to Paul's understanding of

---

[1] TNT I, p. 318-19.

[2] Ibid., p. 327.

[3] Cf. N. H. G. Robinson, The Groundwork of Christian Ethics, p. 184.

the salvation-occurrence, Bultmann expresses this relationship as it is manifest in the decision of faith.

> A homogeneous concept of faith-belief and a single decisive act of faith-belief would be detectable only if the decision-question whether a man is willing to give up his old understanding of himself and henceforth understand himself only from the grace of God and the question whether he will acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Lord should turn out to be one and the same question. That is just what they evidently are in the real intention of Paul.[1]

The beginning of the Christian moral life is thus a decision which is both an acknowledgement regarding God's actions and at the same time a commitment to seeing oneself in relation to those actions. Thus, as Oden has put it, in Bultmann's ethic the imperative and indicative are "as two sides of a coin." Only together do they describe the whole nature of faith. "The imperative is 'hidden' within the indicative, and the indicative is 'hidden' within the imperative."[2] For the Christian moral life, the indicative is the foundation for the imperative and obedience to the imperative fulfills the indicative. This is expressed by Bultmann in a phrase which characterises Christian ethical decision: "Become what thou art!"[3] As Oden has suggested,

---

[1] TNT I, p. 300-301.

[2] Oden, op. cit., p. 95. Cf. Walter Schmithals, An Introduction to the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann, transl. John Bowden (SCM Press, London, 1968), p. 274: "Thus the imperative does not contradict the indicative, nor does it temporarily deprive the indicative of its force."

[3] TNT I, p. 332.

> Becoming who one is . . . is the heart of the ethics of the New Testament, insofar as the Christ event is understood as the forensic eschatological deed of God in which man has been made new by virtue of God's saving deed and insofar as man is called to become the new creature which he already <u>is</u> according to God's verdict.[1]

This is the meaning for Bultmann of the paradoxical statement of Paul, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit,"[2] that "the faith-bestowed possibility of 'living by the Spirit' must be explicitly laid hold of by 'walking by the Spirit.' The indicative is the foundation for the imperative."[3]

Bultmann considers faith, in its two aspects of knowledge and commitment, to be both "radical obedience" and a "new self-understanding" and it is the relation between these two which constitutes the primary difficulty in his understanding of the dialectical tension of indicative and imperative in ethical decision. Bultmann claims that "Ultimately 'faith' and 'knowledge' are identical as a new understanding of one's self . . . " and it is the living out of this new self-understanding which unites the indicative and imperative elements.

---

[1]Oden, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 95.

[2]Galatians 5.25.

[3]<u>TNT</u> I, p. 333. Cf. Bultmann's discussion of the Johannine motif of love in which this paradox is also expressed. "Out of the love we have received arises the <u>obligation to love</u> . . . " <u>TNT</u> II, p. 80-1. Cf. I John 4.11, 19 and John 13.34.

> Faith's obedient submission to God's "grace," the acceptance of the cross of Christ, is the surrender of man's old understanding of himself, in which he lives "unto himself," tries to achieve life by his own strength, and by that very fact falls victim to the powers of sin and death and loses himself . . . The new self-understanding which is bestowed with "faith" is that of freedom in which the believer gains life and thereby his own self.[1]

This freedom which comes to the believer with his decision to accept the new possibility for life is a freedom which opens up the future. For Bultmann, "Freedom is nothing else than being open for the genuine future, letting one's self be determined by the future."[2] In this sense, what faith really means is an attitude of openness in which the believer decides to return to authentic existence with the knowledge that such authenticity requires him to live in love, humility and openness toward others. Here the indicatives which are descriptive of man's authentic existence and which delineate the two possibilities for life in the world appear to be the most critical ones in determining the decision of the man of faith to adopt a new understanding of himself. The other fact which Bultmann claims is essential as well is the presence of man's new possibility made available by God's gracious act in Christ. Yet it is precisely because such an indicative regarding the significance of Christ can only be known through personal decision and, furthermore, because it is to be understood

---

[1] Ibid., p. 330-1. [2] Ibid., p. 335.

as a claim about and upon human existence itself, that its importance as an indicative foundation for ethical imperatives is vitiated.

> The continuing problem in Bultmann's ethics is that on the one hand he argues that man's knowledge of obligation is self-knowledge and subject to existential analysis; yet on the other hand, he proposes that the unique demand of the present moment constitutes the demand of the transcendent God who is beyond all human grasping, but whose demand is made clear in the event of Christian proclamation and is discernible in the moment.[1]

This confusion of heteronomous and autonomous elements in Bultmann's understanding of Christian ethical decision, in which radical obedience and a new self-understanding become one, makes it difficult to determine precisely which facts are really decisive in his explication.

In his analysis of Bultmann's ethic, Robinson claims that

> it is not immediately clear whether the question of obedience can even be raised or not. Everything depends on whether there is someone to obey, for whom to decide in obedience. It depends, in other words, on the reality of a superhuman will to which in his decision a man can render obedience.[2]

If there is such a heteronomous element in Bultmann's ethic, it must be demythologised according to the logic of his analysis of religious claims. Thus, "this act of God must be understood in a completely non-objectifying manner and . . . therefore the eschatological event is

---

[1] Oden, op. cit., p. 121.

[2] Robinson, op. cit., p. 185.

for him without colour, character, or content."[1] Bultmann's lack of clarity on the issue of self-knowledge and knowledge of God results in the loss of any distinctive difference which religious affirmations might make to ethical decision-making.

> What Bultmann needs to be able to say at this point is that man as such stands in relation to God. This, however, he cannot do because it would involve using the word "God" in an objectifying manner, whereas for Bultmann the word is meaningless or mythological apart from an existential apprehension. Consequently the reality for which it stands, or part of it, is brought within the ontological structure of man himself.[2]

Indeed, the conclusion which Robinson would draw from such an insight is that for Bultmann Christian ethical decision is radically autonomous and represents exactly the opposite emphasis to that of Brunner. Indicatives regarding the nature of man's being which are derived from Daseinsanalyse are therefore the source of moral imperatives for authentic man.

As in the case of Tillich, Bultmann assumes in his ethic the importance and relevance of religious affirmations which he then translates into indicatives about human existence. Thus, Robinson claims,

> What is important to notice, however, is that even in Bultmann, if the act of God is affirmed in a completely non-objectifying way, there can be no rational connection between it and what it is alleged to make possible in human existence, a decision of love in the concrete

---

[1] Ibid., p. 189. [2] Ibid., p. 190.

> encounter of the moment. It is only by drawing illegitimately and inconsistently upon the more traditional understanding of Christianity that we can continue to say that we love him because he first loved us. If Bultmann's position is consistently maintained there can be no rational connection (only a blind causative one) between the sheer act of God and the demand and decision of love. Accordingly, the kerygmatic side of Bultmann's thought, upon which he paradoxically insists, does not in the least infringe the autonomous character of the Christian life as he understands it.[1]

Bultmann does attempt to maintain the tension between a decision-that and a decision-to which constitutes the basic ethical attitude informing the Christian life. However, the emphasis on the subjectivity of such an onlook, epitomised by the decision of faith, throws into question the importance of religious claims about man's relation to God and certainly makes their objective truth impossible. If to choose to see oneself in relation to God is to be in relation to him, and if any decision on God's part to love man can only be understood when we examine its effect upon man's possibilities for life, then the decision-that, or the knowledge implicit in faith, is not the acceptance of specifically religious affirmations regarding human life. The decisive indicatives in Bultmann's ethic are therefore those which describe the nature of man and his possibilities for living in this world. However, it is by God's action

---

[1] Ibid., p. 239.

in Christ that these possibilities are opened up to man in his ontic situation and the foundation of Bultmann's ethic, though limited by his understanding of the mythological nature of objective assertions about this action, is nevertheless dependent upon the reality of such an event and the believer's acknowledgement that it is decisive for the formation of his new self-understanding.

CHAPTER IX

THE LOGIC OF CHRISTIAN DECISION

This examination of Christian ethical theory has been designed to expose the source, foundations, and goal of a way of life in the context of which the decisions of the Christian moral agent can be viewed. We have tried to allow the particular vision of the world, of man and of God to emerge from the authors themselves as they develop their distinctive styles of ethical analysis and to view the problems with which such analyses are concerned from within. Within each account the complexities of Christian moral language can be recognised and the varieties of relationship of indicatives to imperatives can be appreciated. Each theologian has attempted to explicate the foundations upon which the Christian moral life depends and from which it flows and has offered an account of the way in which such a life is justified and fulfilled. It remains for us to draw some general conclusions about the way in which indicatives regarding the being and action of God and imperatives for moral action are related to one another within this way of life and to establish the nature of its characteristic vision of the world.

For Tillich, moral decision is a matter of recognising one's participation in Being and of allowing

one's attitude to existence and one's interaction with others to be determined by the activity of Being-itself. This activity of Being by which it overcomes separation and the threat of meaninglessness brought about by non-being is understood by Tillich not only as a description of what is going on at the ontological level but also as a description of man's relation to Being. It is on this basis that Tillich makes his appeal for moral action. What man ought to be doing in his finite existence is understood as a function of what is happening ontologically and decisions are made with respect to this law, that man become existentially what he is essentially. If Being is overcoming the separation between particular beings, and if it is the nature of human life to be a participant in Being, then overcoming separation through love, power, justice and courage is the appropriate thing for human beings to be doing in order to be true to themselves.

What can be seen from analysing Tillich's ontology, however, is that such a description of Being-itself conceals a hidden premise regarding the will of God and assumptions regarding the activity of God. These assumptions are that God has conquered the threat of existential estrangement in and through the life of Christ, that God loves, forgives and accepts the unloveable, unforgiveable, and unacceptable, and that God is in some way responsible for the direction of history towards the fulfillment or reunification of particular beings with their ground and source of power. These notions are

implicit throughout Tillich's account of religious morality though they cannot be made explicit for two reasons. Tillich argues on the one hand that all language about God is necessarily symbolic and that it is not only possible to find in all truth-claims about God the ontological meaning of these claims, but this is also the true or real meaning of language about God. Tillich goes further than this to argue that truth-claims about God can be translated without loss of meaning into statements about Being-itself, with all its implications regarding the nature of human existence. The relationship between God's will and the will of particular human beings is therefore established by claiming that the will of God is the symbolic representation of the movement of Being-itself in which we all participate by nature. The ontological indicatives upon which Tillich would found moral decision therefore have been transformed by Tillich's beliefs about the action and character of God. What is assumed throughout this account is that imperatives for moral action can be related to claims regarding the nature of God and his relationship to man only if such claims are translated into terms regarding Being-itself. Such a translation has the unfortunate result of masking the real foundation upon which Christian ethical behaviour rests and also of deemphasising the role of decision in the adoption of basic moral attitudes. Tillich's account of Christian ethics therefore emerges as a vision of Being reuniting with itself, a vision which Tillich holds to be compelling not only

because of its ability to illuminate and resolve the human predicament but also because of its power to reveal the meaning implicit in traditional religious claims about God.

For Brunner, moral decision is a matter of sheer obedience to the commandments of God, for what is good is precisely what God wills for human life. Morality is thus dependent upon one's coming to know God and allowing one's life to be ruled by God's intentions. There are two pictures by means of which Brunner understands the will of God and in both of these God is described as a being who reveals himself, his intentions and authority over human life through his activities in relation to man. In this revealing of his person and exercise of his authority, he shows himself to be the only source of that which is ultimately good. It is the nature of religious knowledge, in Brunner's analysis, that it involves both a judgement as to the decisiveness of God's will for human life and a commitment to acting in one's own life in conformity with this will. One comes to understand good by willingness to acknowledge the claim which God has upon life, and it is a claim which Brunner argues can be shown to fulfill the inadequacies of other bases for moral decision. Conformity to God's will is therefore fundamentally conformity to God's authoritative onlook, for it is his judgement upon and intention for his creation which furnishes the context of Christian moral action.

Brunner's understanding of the fundamental Christian attitude is marred by difficulties which are raised by his

insistence that morality is a matter of God's activity and not man's. This is seen both in Brunner's reliance upon the fact that God alone is good, that indeed there is no goodness to be found independently of God's giving it, and in his argument that the Christian life begins with a radical self-surrender to determination by God. The reason for such claims would appear to be Brunner's interest in maintaining the transcendence and the autonomy of the moral "ought" by making it completely independent of any ties with man's nature or the structure of the world. His concern to avoid any role which "natural" knowledge of the good might play in ethical decision, except the purely negative one by which it indicates the sinful pretensions of man, leads him to make some contradictory statements regarding the nature of moral reasoning. On the one hand, no such reasoning is possible for, as the term "theology of crisis" implies, there are no general principles of action which can be formulated a priori and applied to particular situations. Ethical decision is a matter of remaining open to the activity of God, of placing oneself within the context of his action. Yet Brunner does appeal to and rely upon human judgement in acknowledging God as the Creator and Redeemer and this is an essential element in the logic of Christian faith. Christian moral reasoning would then be a matter of deepening and transforming one's understanding of the good and one's moral principles by allowing them to be judged, reformed and redirected by the intentions and judgements of God. This understanding would allow for God's

will to be related to man's, not because man's is destroyed, but because it is transformed and redirected by man's beliefs about the reality of God's intentions and by his commitment to becoming personally involved in the activity of God. Thus, moral action could be consistently related to the whole idea of God since he is the acknowledged locus of the good to which moral decisions conform.

Niebuhr's understanding of Christian ethical decision revolves around two polarities which through interaction and synthesis form the ethical ideal to be approximated in human action. On the one hand, Niebuhr's ethic is informed by his analysis of the nature and destiny of man in which historical and philosophical insights are considered and measured for their appropriateness. This investigation of man is one which Niebuhr recognises as having moral implications, for in each account of which he is critical, what man ought to do is intimately bound up with the description of what man is. What he argues is that neither in terms of the description nor in terms of the evaluation is any picture of man adequate which does not take into account the relationship of man with God. Fundamental to Christian ethical theory, according to Niebuhr, is the acknowledgement of the inherent contradiction in man's nature, by which he knows himself to be both finite and free, both creature and made in the image of God. Such an acknowledgement constitutes the verdictive element in the formation of an onlook regarding

human existence and it is bound up with a commitment to viewing man in terms of his whole being and to behaving in accordance with this image. Thus one pole of Christian ethical decision is formed by an evaluative description of man which Niebuhr argues is convincing and reasonable.

At the other pole of decision is the judgement and will of God which, for Niebuhr, furnishes both the proper perspective to take upon human existence and establishes the limits on the appropriate moral attitude. God reveals his intention for human life through the life of Christ and it is here therefore that the norm of human action is found and realised. This norm, for Niebuhr, is not one which contradicts the "natural" assessment of human life, as one sees in the case of Brunner, but rather one which brings to fulfillment the partial, incomplete and inadequate understandings of life which are derived independently of God's verdict. What is peculiar to the religious apprehension of human life in its fullest dimensions is the recognition of the attitude and behaviour which characterises the whole of human existence, namely man's sinful self-assertion. It is this recognition, by which man comes to acknowledge God and his own sin in the same act of consciousness, which then can fulfill and deepen man's understanding of himself and his commitment to moral action, adding to his previous moral knowledge a breadth and depth which would otherwise be lacking. The tension of these two polarities formed by natural law and the law of God is a constant dialogue in Niebuhr's analysis and

results in the judgement that the meaning of human life is to be found in obedience to the law of love. Love becomes the ethical ideal in conformity with which man becomes most truly human and experiences the reality of God's love for man. Ethical decision is thus a matter of realistically assessing the nature of the situation, which involves both a recognition of the sinful and relative elements in human history and social interaction as well as an acceptance of the reality of God's judgement and forgiveness, and of approximating the law of love through the practical alternatives at one's disposal. In this way Niebuhr hoped to unify both deontological and teleological elements in the Christian ethic by arguing that love is not only the ultimate principle by which we should measure our behaviour but also the goal towards which ethical decision should be directed. Indicatives regarding the nature and destiny of man and those regarding the powerful judgement and forgiving love of God thus combine to form the basis of ethical imperatives.

It is in the writings of Bultmann that the relationship of indicative and imperative is explicitly analysed and the roots of the Christian moral life in the ethical teachings of the New Testament are explored. Bultmann characterises the new attitude which is fundamental to the Christian life as a new self-understanding in which the Christian allows his behaviour and opinions to be informed by the new possibility for life which has

opened up by God's action in Christ. In the context of Christian preaching about the events and the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus, certain implications are present regarding the nature of human life in the world and the essential possibilities from which man is estranged. It is Bultmann's intention, in much the same way as Tillich, to draw out these anthropological and ontological assertions and to find through them the means for coming to terms with religious claims about God's character and action. Thus Bultmann claims that the source of the Christian onlook is an action of God which is revealing and powerful, which both illuminates the nature of life and creates the conditions for its fulfillment. This historical event, Bultmann argues, cannot be understood objectively as an act of God, since this would be to speak mythologically, but must be appropriated subjectively through the acknowledgement implicit in faith. Yet it is precisely Bultmann's inability to speak of these historical facts except in terms of their effect upon man's self-understanding that results in a contradiction within his analysis. Bultmann seems to have adopted the view that stating facts is a purely non-evaluative act and that facts themselves, either historical or metaphysical, only have significance for moral action when it can be said that to know or understand them is to know or understand one's own self. This severely limits the role of indicatives regarding a factual core of events around which the Christian onlook is formulated.

Indeed, this leads to the further confusion regarding those indicatives which really do serve as the basis for Bultmann's understanding of Christian moral decision. Indicatives derived from his Daseinsanalyse are important as a source of moral imperatives since it is in coming to understand ourselves, our ontic existence and our ontological possibilities that we come to know the good. The demand to become what one is is derived from the judgement that man has lost the possibility for authentic existence which he really desires and that this possibility can only be returned to him by his decision to take it up and act upon it. Such a decision cannot be made, however, without the actual presence in history of the new possibility in which God opens up human authenticity. If this is a purely causal or psychological relationship between indicatives regarding God's action on behalf of man and imperatives to obey God's intention in this action, then it is still unclear in Bultmann's analysis how he can describe or be said to know anything about the event in which this power is made available. There must, in other words, be some minimal objective and factual core which cannot be equated with statements about man's being which is presupposed by Bultmann but which he cannot make any claims about, since this would be to speak mythologically. The verdictive element in the formation of the primary Christian onlook is thus difficult to understand in Bultmann's analysis since, although it has factual presuppositions regarding the being and activity of God, it

is not at all clear how knowledge of God and assertions regarding his demands and purposes differ from knowledge of one's own self and assertions about authentic human life. Thus, while Bultmann argues that the indicative and imperative are two sides of a coin, being united in terms of a new self-understanding, it is not self-evident that such a unity can be achieved without sacrificing the uniqueness and importance of assertions about God.

In his analysis of Christian ethical theory, Keith Ward has argued for the existence of factual presuppositions regarding God and his action in the life of Christ which provide the framework for moral attitudes and behaviour.[1] In his argument against Braithwaite, he suggests that the characteristic moral attitude of the Christian way of life embodies "certain assertions about matters of fact," and is not therefore merely a set of principles which one adopts as guides for behaviour.[2] If the Christian ethic is dependent upon the believer's assuming a stance with regard to his own life, the being of God and their relationship, then it can also be argued that such a stance involves claims about these subjects which the believer holds to be true, adequate, and perhaps even rational. Thus, as Ward has said,

> . . . it is a logical truth that the expression of an attitude entails the existence of some

---

[1] Ward, "Christian Ethics and the Being of God," Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol. 22, No. 1 (1969), p. 78-89.

[2] Ibid., p. 82.

> factual as well as evaluative beliefs in the mind of the person who expresses it. One could not say of anyone that they expressed an attitude if they did not have certain factual beliefs about its object; and one could not describe their attitude correctly without mentioning the object to which it is directed.[1]

What is clear in examining the logic of Christian decision is that these presuppositions not only are indicative of the total scheme within which moral action is to take place but also provide adequate grounds for the derivation of imperatives.

The Christian ethic is not, therefore, as Braithwaite had suggested, the attachment of an a priori commitment to a particular set of facts which the moral agent finds supportive and encouraging. One's intentions to act within this way of life are not chosen independently of the context of reality in which one believes oneself to be involved. Indicatives regarding this reality are self-involving in the Christian ethic; they are not mere constatives but rather imply and depend upon the orientation of the believer's intentions and judgements into conformity with them. Thus

> . . . the Christian ethic consists in adopting a total attitude to experience, and depends essentially on the (logically) prior acceptance of factual beliefs about the being and nature of God. It is in these beliefs, in their function of specifying a particular way of life, and in these alone, that the distinctiveness of Christian ethics consists.[2]

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 89.

Such an understanding of the fundamental onlook in the Christian moral life is offered in support of the internal relationship between indicative and imperative which is critical to understanding the logic of ethical decision-making.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Acton, H. B. Kant's Moral Philosophy. New Studies in Ethics. Macmillan, London, 1970.

Anscombe, G. E. M. Intention. Blackwell, Oxford, 1957.

Aristotle. Nicomachaen Ethics. Transl. J. A. K. Thomson. Penguin Books, Baltimore, Maryland, 1963.

Austin, J. L. How to do Things with Words. Oxford University Press, London, 1970 [originally published in 1962].

_____. Philosophical Papers. Ed. J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock. Oxford University Press, London, 1961.

Ayer, A. J. Language, Truth and Logic. Victor Gollancz, London, 1955.

_____. Logical Positivism. Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1959.

_____. Philosophical Essays. St. Martin's Press, New York, 1963 [originally published in 1954].

Bartley, W. W., III. Morality and Religion. New Studies in the Philosophy of Religion. Macmillan, London, 1971.

Bartsch, H. W., ed. Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate. Transl. R. H. Fuller. Harper and Row, New York, 1961.

Beardsmore, R. W. Moral Reasoning. Studies in Ethics and the Philosophy of Religion. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1969.

Broad, C. D. Five Types of Ethical Theory. International Library of Psychology, Philosophy and Scientific Method. Harcourt, Brace and Co., New York, 1930.

Brown, D. G. Action. Allen and Unwin, London, 1968.

Brunner, Emil. The Divine-Human Encounter. Transl. Amandus W. Loos. SCM Press, London, 1944.

_____. The Divine Imperative: A Study in Christian Ethics. Transl. Olive Wyon. Lutterworth Press, London, 1942.

_____. God and Man: Four Essays on the Nature of Personality. Transl. David Cairns. SCM Press, London, 1936.

_____. Justice and the Social Order. Transl. Mary Wottinger. Harper and Brothers, London, 1945.

_____. The Mediator. Transl. Olive Wyon. Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1947.

_____. Revelation and Reason: The Christian Doctrine of Faith and Knowledge. Transl. Olive Wyon. SCM Press, London, 1947.

Bultmann, Rudolf. Essays Philosophical and Theological. Transl. J. C. G. Greig. SCM Press, London, 1955.

_____. Existence and Faith. Selected and transl. by Shubert Ogden. World Publishing Co., New York, 1960.

_____. Faith and Understanding. Transl. L. P. Smith. SCM Press, London, 1969.

_____. History and Eschatology. Gifford Lectures 1955. University of Edinburgh Press, Edinburgh, 1957.

_____. Hope. Kittel's Bible Key Words. Transl. D. M. Barton. A. & C. Black, London, 1963.

_____. Jesus and the Word. Transl. L. P. Smith and E. H. Lantero. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1958.

_____. Jesus Christ and Mythology. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1958.

_____. Theology of the New Testament. Transl. Kendrick Grobel. 2 vols. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1951 and 1955.

_____ and Weiser, A. Faith. Kittel's Bible Key Words. Transl. D. M. Barton. A. & C. Black, London, 1961.

Campbell, C. A. In Defense of Free Will. Muirhead Library of Philosophy. Allen and Unwin, London, 1967.

_____. On Selfhood and Godhood. Gifford Lectures 1953 and 1955. Muirhead Library of Philosophy. Allen and Unwin, London, 1957.

Cherbonnier, Edmond La B. Hardness of Heart: A Contemporary Interpretation of the Doctrine of Sin. Victor Gollancz, London, 1956.

Christian, William. Meaning and Truth in Religion. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1964.

d'Entreves, A. P. Natural Law: An Introduction to Legal Philosophy. Hutchinson University Library, London, 1970.

Dodd, C. H. The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments. Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1970 [originally published in 1936].

_____. Gospel and Law. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1951.

Edgley, Roy. Reason in Theory and Practice. Hutchinson University Library, London, 1969.

Edwards, Paul. The Logic of Moral Discourse. Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1955.

Emmet, Dorothy. Facts and Obligations. Dr. Williams' Library, London, 1958.

_____. Rules, Roles, and Relations. Macmillan, London, 1966.

Evans, Donald. The Logic of Self-Involvement. Library of Philosophy and Theology. SCM Press, London, 1963.

Ewing, A. C. Teach Yourself Ethics. English University Press, London, 1967 [originally published in 1956].

Farmer, H. H. Revelation and Religion. Harper and Row, New York, 1954.

Farrer, Austin. Faith and Speculation: An Essay in Philosophical Theology. A. & C. Black, London, 1967.

_____. The Freedom of the Will. Gifford Lectures 1957. A. & C. Black, London, 1958.

_____. Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited. Fontana Library of Theology and Philosophy. Collins, London, 1966 [originally published 1962].

Feinberg, Joel, ed. Moral Concepts. Oxford Readings in Philosophy. Oxford University Press, London, 1969.

Ferre, F. Language, Logic and God. Fontana Library of Theology and Philosophy. Collins, London, 1970 [originally published 1962].

Fletcher, Joseph. Situation Ethics: The New Morality. Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1966.

Flew, A. G. N. Logic and Language. First and Second Series. Blackwell, Oxford, 1968 and 1966.

_____, and MacIntyre, A., eds. New Essays in Philosophical Theology. SCM Press, London, 1955.

Foot, Philippa, ed. Theories of Ethics. Oxford Readings in Philosophy. Oxford University Press, London, 1967.

Frankena, William K. Ethics. Foundations of Philosophy Series. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1963.

Garrard, L. A. Duty and the Will of God. Blackwell, Oxford, 1938.

Gustafson, James M. Christ and the Moral Life. Harper and Row, New York, 1968.

Hare, R. M. Freedom and Reason. Oxford University Press, London, 1967 [originally published 1963].

_____. The Language of Morals. Oxford University Press, London, 1967 [originally published 1952].

Harland, Gordon. The Thought of Reinhold Niebuhr. Oxford University Press, New York, 1960.

Hepburn, Ronald W. Christianity and Paradox. C. A. Watts, London, 1958.

Hick, John. Evil and the God of Love. Fontana Library of Theology and Philosophy. Collins, London, 1968 [originally published 1966].

_____, ed. The Existence of God. Macmillan, New York, 1964.

High, Dallas M. New Essays on Religious Language. Oxford University Press, New York, 1969.

Hudson, W. D., ed. The Is/Ought Question. Controversies in Philosophy Series. Macmillan, London, 1969.

_____. Modern Moral Philosophy. Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1970.

Hume, David. A Treatise of Human Nature. Transl. L. A. Selby-Bigge. Oxford University Press, London, 1955 [originally published 1888].

Jaspers, Karl. The Perennial Scope of Philosophy. Transl. Ralph Manheim. Philosophical Library, New York, 1949.

Kant, Immanuel. Critique of Practical Reason. Library of Liberal Arts. Bobbs-Merrill, New York, 1956 [originally published 1788].

_____. Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals. Library of Liberal Arts. Bobbs-Merrill, New York, 1959 [originally published 1785].

Kegley, Charles W., ed. The Theology of Emil Brunner. Library of Living Theology. Macmillan, New York, 1962.

_____, ed. The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann. Library of Living Theology. SCM Press, London, 1966.

_____ and Bretall, Robert W., eds. Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social, and Political Thought. Library of Living Theology. Macmillan, New York, 1967.

_____, eds. The Theology of Paul Tillich. Library of Living Theology. Macmillan, New York, 1964.

Kierkegaard, Søren. The Concept of Dread. Transl. Walter Lowrie. 2nd ed. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1967.

_____. Concluding Unscientific Postscript. Transl. David E. Swenson. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1941.

Lehmann, Paul. Ethics in a Christian Context. Library of Philosophy and Theology. SCM Press, London, 1963.

Lewis, C. I. Values and Imperatives. Ed. John Lange. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1969.

Lewis, C. S. The Problem of Pain. Collins, London, 1969 [originally published 1940].

Lewis, H. D. Freedom and History. Muirhead Library of Philosophy. Allen and Unwin, London, 1962.

_____. Morals and Revelation. Muirhead Library of Philosophy. Allen and Unwin, London, 1951.

_____. Morals and the New Theology. Victor Gollancz, London, 1947.

_____. Our Experience of God. Fontana Library of Theology and Philosophy. Collins, London, 1970 [originally published 1959].

_____. Teach Yourself Philosophy of Religion. English University Press, London, 1965.

MacKinnon, Donald M. Borderlands of Theology and Other Essays. Lutterworth Press, London, 1968.

_____. A Study in Ethical Theory. A. & C. Black, London, 1957.

MacLagan, W. G. The Theological Frontier of Ethics. Muirhead Library of Philosophy. Allen and Unwin, London, 1961.

MacQuarrie, J. An Existentialist Theology: A Comparison of Heidegger and Bultmann. Harper and Row, New York, 1965.

_____. Three Issues in Ethics. Harper and Row, New York, 1970.

Malcolm, Norman. Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir. Oxford University Press, London, 1968.

Marcel, Gabriel. Creative Fidelity. Transl. Robert Rosthal. Farrar, Straus and Co., New York, 1964.

_____. Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope. Transl. Emma Craufurd. Harper and Brothers, New York, 1962.

Martin, B. Tillich's Doctrine of Man. Nisbet and Co., Welwyn, Herts., 1966.

Martin, James A. The New Dialogue between Philosophy and Theology. A. & C. Black, London, 1966.

Melden, A. I. Rights and Right Conduct. Blackwell, Oxford, 1959.

Midgley, L. C. Beyond Human Nature: The Contemporary Debate over Moral Natural Law. Charles E. Merrill Monograph Series in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Brigham Young University Press, Provo, Utah, 1968.

Mitchell, Basil, ed. Faith and Logic. Allen and Unwin, London, 1957.

Moltmann, Jürgen. Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology. Transl. J. W. Leitch. SCM Press, London, 1967.

Moore, G. E. Principia Ethica. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968 [originally published 1903].

Niebuhr, H. Richard. Christ and Culture. Harper and Row, New York, 1956.

_____. The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy. Harper and Row, New York, 1963.

Niebuhr, Reinhold. Beyond Tragedy: Essays on the Christian Interpretation of History. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1955 [originally published 1937].

_____. The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1960.

_____. Christian Realism and Political Problems. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1953.

_____. Faith and History: A Comparison of Christian and Modern Views of History. Nisbet and Co., London, 1949.

_____. An Interpretation of Christian Ethics. Harper and Brothers, New York, 1935.

_____. Love and Justice. Ed. D. B. Robertson. Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1957.

_____. Moral Man and Immoral Society. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1960 [originally published 1932].

_____. The Nature and Destiny of Man. Gifford Lectures 1939 and 1943. 2 vols. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1941 and 1943.

_____. Reflecting on the End of an Era. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1936.

_____. The Self and the Dramas of History. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1955.

Nowell-Smith, P. H. Ethics. Penguin Books, London, 1967 [originally published 1954].

O'Connor, D. J. Aquinas and Natural Law. New Studies in Ethics. Macmillan, London, 1967.

Oden, Thomas C. Radical Obedience: The Ethics of Rudolf Bultmann. Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1964.

Outka, G. H. and Ramsey, P., eds. Norm and Context in Christian Ethics. Library of Philosophy and Theology. SCM Press, London, 1969.

Paton, H. J. The Categorical Imperative: A Study in Kant's Moral Philosophy. Hutchinson University Library, London, 1946.

_____. The Modern Predicament. Muirhead Library of Philosophy. Allen and Unwin, London, 1955.

_____. The Moral Law: Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals. Hutchinson University Library, London, 1969.

Perry, R. B. General Theory of Value. Longmans, Green, London, 1926.

Phillips, D. Z. and Mounce, H. O. Moral Practices. Studies in Ethics and the Philosophy of Religion. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1970.

Pike, Nelson, ed. Readings on the Theological Problem of Evil. Contemporary Perspectives in Philosophy Series. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1964.

Pittenger, W. Norman. The Word Incarnate: A Study of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ. Nisbet and Co., London, 1959.

Plantinga, A., ed. Faith and Philosophy: Philosophical Studies in Religion and Ethics. William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1964.

Porter, Burton F. Deity and Morality with regard to the Naturalistic Fallacy. Allen and Unwin, London, 1968.

Prichard, H. A. Moral Obligation. Oxford University Press, London, 1968.

Prior, A.N. Logic and the Basis of Ethics. Oxford University Press, London, 1968 [originally published 1949].

Ramsey, Ian T., ed. Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy. Library of Philosophy and Theology. SCM Press, London, 1966.

_____, ed. Prospect for Metaphysics: Essays of Metaphysical Exploration. Allen and Unwin, London, 1961.

_____. Religious Language. Macmillan, New York, 1967 [originally published 1957].

_____, ed. Words About God: The Philosophy of Religion. SCM Press, London, 1971.

Ramsey, Paul. Deeds and Rules in Christian Ethics. Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers, No. 11. Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1965.

_____. Nine Modern Moralists. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1962.

Rescher, Nicholas. The Logic of Commands. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966.

Richards, I. A. and Ogden, C. K. The Meaning of Meaning. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1923.

Robinson, N. H. G. The Groundwork of Christian Ethics. William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1971.

Roubiczek, Paul. Ethical Values in the Age of Science. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1969.

Royal Institute of Philosophy. Lectures, Vol. Two, 1967/68. Talk of God. Macmillan, London, 1969.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. Existentialism and Humanism. Transl. P. Mairet. Methuen, London, 1948.

Schilpp, P. A., ed. The Philosophy of G. E. Moore. The Library of Living Philosophers. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 1942.

Schmithals, W. An Introduction to the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann. Transl. J. Bowden. SCM Press, London, 1968.

Schweitzer, A. The Quest of the Historical Jesus. Macmillan, New York, 1968 [originally published 1906].

Scott, N. A. Reinhold Niebuhr. University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers, No. 31. Minneapolis, 1963.

Stebbing, Susan. A Modern Introduction to Logic. Methuen, London, 1930.

Stevenson, C. L. Ethics and Language. Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 1948.

_____. Facts and Values. Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 1963.

Thomas, J. Heywood. Paul Tillich: An Appraisal. Library of Philosophy and Theology. SCM Press, London, 1963.

_____. Subjectivity and Paradox. Blackwell, Oxford, 1957.

Tillich, Paul. Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1955.

_____. The Courage To Be. Collins, London, 1969 [originally published 1952].

_____. Dynamics of Faith. Harper and Row, New York, 1958.

_____. Love, Power and Justice: Ontological Analyses and Ethical Applications. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1960.

_____. Morality and Beyond. Collins, London, 1969 [originally published 1963].

_____. Systematic Theology. The combined volume edition. Nisbet and Co., Welwyn, Herts., 1968.

_____. Theology of Culture. Ed. R. C. Kimball. Oxford University Press, London, 1964 [originally published 1959].

Toulmin, S. E. The Place of Reason in Ethics. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968.

Urmson, J. O. The Emotive Theory of Ethics. Hutchinson University Library, London, 1968.

von Wright, G. H. An Essay in Deontic Logic and the General Theory of Action. Acta Philosophica Fennica XXI. North Holland Publishing Co., Amsterdam, 1968.

_____. Norm and Action: A Logical Enquiry. International Library of Philosophy and Scientific Method. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1963.

Ward, Keith. Ethics and Christianity. Muirhead Library of Philosophy. Allen and Unwin, London, 1970.

Warnock, G. J. Contemporary Moral Philosophy. New Studies in Ethics. Macmillan, London, 1967.

Warnock, Mary. Ethics since 1900. Oxford University Press, London, 1960.

Wingren, G. Theology in Conflict: Nygren, Barth, Bultmann. Transl. E. H. Wahlstrom. Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1958.

Articles

Anscombe, G. E. M. "Modern Moral Philosophy." Philosophy, Vol. XXXIII (1958), p. 1-19. Reprinted in J. J. Thomson and G. Dworkin, Ethics. Harper and Row, New York, 1968.

_____. "On Brute Facts." Analysis, Vol. XVIII (1958), p. 69-72. Reprinted in J. J. Thomson and G. Dworkin, Ethics. Harper and Row, New York, 1968.

Ayer, A. J. "On the Analysis of Moral Judgments." Horizon, Vol. XX, No. 117 (1949). Reprinted in A. J. Ayer, Philosophical Essays (see Books).

Black, Max. "The Gap between 'Is' and 'Should.'" Philosophical Review, Vol. LXXIII (1964), p. 165-181. Reprinted in W. D. Hudson, ed., The Is/Ought Question (see Books).

Bohnert, H. G. "The Semiotic Status of Commands." Philosophy of Science, Vol. 12 (1945), p. 302-15.

Braithwaite, R. B. "An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief." Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1955. Reprinted in Ian T. Ramsey, ed., Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy (see Books).

Brown, D. G. "The Nature of Inference." Philosophical Review, Vol. LXIV (1955), p. 351-69.

de Deugd, Cornelius. "Old Wine in New Bottles?" Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures. Talk of God, Vol. Two. Macmillan, London, 1969.

Ewing, A. C. "The Autonomy of Ethics." In Prospect for Metaphysics, ed. Ian T. Ramsey. Allen and Unwin, London, 1961.

Flew, A. G. N. "On Not Deriving 'Ought' from 'Is.'" Analysis, Vol. XXV (1964), p. 25-32.

_____. "On the Interpretation of Hume." Philosophy, Vol. XXXVIII (1963), p. 178-182. Reply by Geoffrey Hunter, p. 182-84. Reprinted in W. D. Hudson, ed., The Is/Ought Question (see Books).

Foot, Philippa. "Goodness and Choice." The Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Vol. XXXV (1961), p. 45-60. Reprinted in W. D. Hudson, ed., The Is/Ought Question (see Books).

_____. "Moral Arguments." Mind, Vol. 67 (1958), p. 502-13. Reprinted in J. J. Thomson and G. Dworkin, Ethics. Harper and Row, New York, 1968.

_____. "Moral Beliefs." Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Vol. LIX (1958-59), p. 83-104. Reprinted in W. D. Hudson, The Is/Ought Question (see Books).

_____. "When is a Principle a Moral Principle?" The Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Vol. XXVIII (1954), p. 95-110.

Frankena, W. K. "The Naturalistic Fallacy." Mind, Vol. 48 (1939), p. 464-77.

Geach, P. T. "Imperative and Deontic Logic." Analysis, Vol. XVIII (1958), p. 49-56.

Gibbons, P. C. "Imperatives and Indicatives." The Australasian Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 38, Nos. 2 - 3 (1960), p. 107-119 and 207-217.

Hare, R. M. "Descriptivism." Proceedings of the British Academy, Vol. XLIX (1963). Reprinted in W. D. Hudson, ed., The Is/Ought Question (see Books).

_____. "Freedom of the Will." The Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Vol. XXV (1951), p. 201-216.

_____. "Imperative Sentences." Mind, Vol. LVIII (1949), p. 21-39.

_____. "The Promising Game." Revue Internationale de Philosophie, No. 70 (1964), p. 398-412. Reprinted in W. D. Hudson, ed., The Is/Ought Question (see Books).

_____. "Universalisability." Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Vol. LV (1954-55), p. 295-312.

Harrison, Jonathan. "When is a Principle a Moral Principle?" The Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Vol. XXVIII (1954), p. 111-134.

Hepburn, R. W. "Vision and Choice in Morality." The Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Vol. XXX (1956), p. 14-31. Reprinted in Ian T. Ramsey, ed., Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy (see Books).

Hofstadter, A. and McKinsey, J. C. C. "The Logic of Imperatives." Philosophy of Science, Vol. 6 (1939), p. 446-57.

Holland, R. F. "The Autonomy of Ethics." The Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Vol. XXXII (1958), p. 25-48.

Hunter, Geoffrey. "Hume on 'Is' and 'Ought.'" Philosophy, Vol. XXXVII (1962), p. 148-52. Reprinted in W. D. Hudson, ed., The Is/Ought Question (see Books).

Jonas, Hans. "Gnosticism and Modern Nihilism." Social Research, Vol. 19, No. 4 (1952), p. 430-52.

Kenny, A. J. "Practical Inference." Analysis, Vol. XXVI, No. 3 (1966), p. 65-75.

Lemmon, John. "Moral Dilemmas." Philosophical Review, Vol. LXXI (1962), p. 139-58. Reprinted in Ian T. Ramsey, ed., Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy (see Books).

Lindbeck, G. A. "Natural Law in the Thought of Paul Tillich." Natural Law Forum, Vol. 7 (1962), p. 84-96.

_____. "Revelation, Natural Law, and the Thought of Reinhold Niebuhr." Natural Law Forum, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1959), p. 146-51.

Mayo, B. and Mitchell, B. "Varieties of Imperative." The Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Vol. XXXI (1957), p. 175-90.

McClellan, James E. and Komisar, B. Paul. "On Deriving 'Ought' from 'Is.'" Analysis, Vol. XXV (1964), p. 32-37.

Midgley, L. C. "Paul Tillich's New Science of Values." Western Political Quarterly, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1962), p. 235-53.

Murdoch, Iris. "Metaphysics and Ethics." In The Nature of Metaphysics, ed. D. F. Pears. London, 1957.

_____. "Vision and Choice in Morality." The Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Vol. XXX (1956), p. 32-58. Reprinted in Ian T. Ramsey, ed., Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy (see Books).

Niebuhr, Reinhold. "Christian Faith and Natural Law." Theology (1940), p. 86-94.

Nielson, Kai. "An Examination of the Thomistic Theory of Natural Moral Law." Natural Law Forum, Vol. 4 (1959), p. 44-71.

_____. "God and the Good: Does Morality need Religion?" Theology Today, Vol. 21 (1964), p. 47-58.

_____. "Some Remarks on the Independence of Morality from Religion." Mind, Vol. LXX (1961), p. 175-86. Reprinted in Ian T. Ramsey, ed., Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy (see Books).

Nowell-Smith, P. H. "Morality: Religious and Secular." Rationalist Annual (1961). Reprinted in Ian T. Ramsey, ed., Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy (see Books).

Phillips, D. Z. "The Possibilities of Moral Advice." Analysis, Vol. XXV (1964), p. 37-41. Reprinted in D. Z. Phillips and H. O. Mounce, Moral Practices (see Books).

Prior, A. N. "The Autonomy of Ethics." The Australasian Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 38, No. 3 (1960), p. 199-206.

Rees, D. A. "The Ethics of Divine Commands." Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Vol. LVII (1956-57), p. 83-106.

_____. "Metaphysical Schemes and Moral Principles." In Prospect for Metaphysics, ed. Ian T. Ramsey. Allen and Unwin, London, 1961.

Ross, A. "Imperatives and Logic." Philosophy of Science, Vol. 11 (1944), p. 30-46.

Searle, J. R. "How to Derive 'Ought' from 'Is.'" Philosophical Review, Vol. LXXIII (1964), p. 43-58. Reprinted in W. D. Hudson, ed., The Is/Ought Question (see Books).

Smart, Ninian. "Gods, Bliss and Morality." Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Vol. LVIII (1957-58), p. 59-78. Reprinted in Ian T. Ramsey, ed., Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy (see Books).

Thomas, George F. "Niebuhr on Reason and Metaphysics." In "Reinhold Niebuhr: A Symposium," Union Seminary Quarterly, Vol. XI, No. 4 (1956), p. 16-21.

Tillich, Paul. "Being and Love." In Moral Principles of Action: Man's Ethical Imperative, ed. Ruth Nanda Anshen. Harper and Row, New York, 1952.

_____. "Is a Science of Human Values Possible?" In New Knowledge in Human Values, ed. Abraham H. Maslow. Harper and Row, New York, 1959.

Walsh, W. H. "The Autonomy of Ethics." Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 7 (1957), p. 1-14.

Ward, Keith. "Christian Ethics and the Being of God." Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol. 22, No. 1 (1969), p. 78-89.

Williams, B. A. O. "Imperative Inference." Analysis, Supplementary Vol. XXIII (1963), p. 30-36. Reply by P. T. Geach, p. 37-42.